

SERMONS
AND
DISCOURSES
ON
PRACTICAL SUBJECTS.

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Honourable SOCIETY of *Grays-Inn*.

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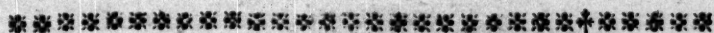
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SERMON



S E R M O N I.

The Reason why Men love Dark-
ness rather than Light.



JOHN iii. 19.

*And this is the Condemnation, that
Light is come into the World, and
Men loved Darkness rather than
Light, because their Deeds were
Evil.*



IN these Words there are SERM.
three Things more espe- I.
cially, that offer themselves
unto our Consideration.

I. First, WHAT we are to understand
VOL. II. B by

The Reason why Men love

SERM. by that *Light*, which is here said to be

I. *come into the World.*

~ II. *Secondly*, How it came to pass, that Men should reject this *Light*, and wilfully shut their Eyes against it. And

III. *Thirdly*, How just and inevitable the Condemnation of such Men is; *This* says he that shall finally be their Judge; *This is the Condemnation, that Light is come into the World, and Men loved Darknes rather than Light, because their Deeds were Evil.*

OF each of these in their Order, as Time will permit. And

I. THE *First* Point to be settled is, what we are to understand by that *Light*, which is said to be *come into the World.*

AND this may be understood, both of the Person of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, and of his Doctrine.

OF his Person, both as he is eternal, essential, uncreated *Light*, the *Brightness of his Father's Glory*, very Light of very Light, but manifested to us in the *Flesh*, and also as he is the *Messiah*, that *great Prophet*,
that

Darkness rather than Light.

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that was to come into the World, and to be SERM.
set up for a Light to the Gentiles, and to I.
all the Ends of the Earth: To whom all
the Prophets give Witness, and some of
them describe him particularly under this
very Character; as may be seen, Isaiah x.
17. xlii. 6. xlix. 6. Micah vii. 6. Malachi
iv. 2. and elsewhere.

AND therefore correspondent to this
Prophetic Character, our *Evangelist* styles
him *the Light, and the true Light.* And Chap. i. 5.
he takes the Style upon himself, *I am the* 9.
Light of the World: He that followeth me, Chap. viii.
12.
shall not walk in Darkness, but shall have
the Light of Life. And again, *I am come* Chap. xii. 1
a Light into the World, that whosoever be- 46.
lieveth in me, should not continue in Dark-
ness.

BUT the *Light* that is here said to be
come into the World, may very consistently
be understood of the Doctrine of *Christ*, as
well as his Person; for 'tis his heavenly
Doctrine, that is truly *φῶς εἰς ἀποκάλυψιν*,
that bright Light of Revelation, that has
dispelled all thick Mists of Ignorance, Er-
ror, Vice, and Corruption; that has fully
made known the Righteousness of God

S E R M. unto Men, that has display'd and laid open

I. the Mystery of divine Love in the Redemption of Mankind, that has so comfortably *shone upon them who sate in Dark-ness, and the Shadow of Death*; and so safely guided their Feet in the Way of Peace and Happiness. And 'tis accordingly called by
 2 Cor. iv. St. Paul, *The Light of the glorious Gospel*
 4. *of Christ*, as being immediately derived from *him*, who is according to that lofty
 Chap. vii. Description of him in the Book of *Wis-*
 26. *dom, the Brightness of everlasting Light, the unspotted Mirrour of the Power of God, and the Image of his Goodness.*

TAKING therefore the Doctrine of *Chri-*
stianity, as it was deliver'd to us, by its Divine Author, whilst he took up his *Tabernacle* among us, for *that Light which is come into the World*; I shall shew in the Sequel, that it well deserves the Character, and fully comes up to it.

AND this, If I should allow my self to stretch the Comparison as far as it will go, and seek for every little Resemblance that might be found, might be made out in Abundance of Particulars. I might insist, that the *Gospel* like *Light*, is the most
 glorious

Darkness rather than Light.

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glorious Thing to behold, as representing SERM.
to us the Secrets and Wonders of God's I.
Nature, and Counsels, and Providence, and
Grace: That the Purity of the *Gospel* like
that of *Light*, is perfectly spotless and un-
blemished: That the Propagation of the
Gospel, like that of *Light* when first *the*
Day dawn'd from on high, was inconceiva-
bly swift, diffusing itself (as it were) at
once, over the Face of the whole habitable
World: That the splendour of the *Gospel*
like that of *Light*, is always the same,
bright, and unextinguishable, though not
alike discernible to all, and in all Places,
by reason of Peoples wilful, or judicial
Blindness, or some other unhappy Obsta-
cle, or Interposition from this Earth.

AND *Lastly*, To mention no more, that
the Mysteries of the *Gospel*, like those of
Light, though made manifest to the Saints,
are not so obvious to the Eye of the natu-
ral Man, are not to be resolved into the
common Principles of *Philosophy*; nay, they
are indeed in their own Nature inexplica-
ble, and incomprehensible.

You perceive by these Instances, that
the Parallel might be drawn to a good

SERM. Length. But I chuse at present to confine

I. myself to two Particulars, which answer directly to two of the most eminent Properties of Light; viz. *First*, That it is that, which helps even the Eye to see, and makes every Thing else visible. And *Secondly*, That it is of itself the most conspicuous of all Things.

AND in perfect Analogy to these two Properties of Light, I shall now apply myself to shew,

First, THAT the *Gospel Revelation* plainly discovers, and makes known to us, all the great, and important Truths of Religion: Both those, which natural Reason of itself was not able to descry, or else had lost the Sight of; and also those which were before but obscurely, and imperfectly revealed. And

Secondly, THAT the *Gospel Revelation* is proposed to us with the highest, and brightest Degree of Evidence. So that like *Light*, it helps even the Eye to see, and makes every Thing else visible; and at the same Time is of all other Things the most conspicuous.

THIS

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SERM.

I.

THIS, it lies upon me to make out more distinctly.

AND *First*, That the *Gospel Revelation* plainly discovers to us, and makes known all the great, and important Truths of Religion; both those that natural Reason was unable to descry of itself, or else had lost the Sight of; and those which were before but obscurely, and imperfectly reveal'd.

AND these Discoveries, (or the most material of them) are reducible to these following Heads; *viz. First*, They are such as acquaint us with the Nature of God, and his Worship: Or, *Secondly*, With his wise, and wonderful Counsels concerning the Redemption of Mankind: Or *Thirdly*, With our own true State, and Condition: Or, *Fourthly*, With the Sum, and Substance, and Extent of our Duty, together with the best Motives to Practice: Or, *Lastly*, With the End, and Perfection of our Being. In all which Points, the World has been marvellously enlightened by the *Gospel of Christ*, in Comparison of that Darkness of Ignorance, in which the *Gentiles* were involved, and that Dimness of

B 4 Knowledge,

SERM. Knowledge, that was imparted to the

I. *Jews.* And

~~~~~ *First*, CONCERNING those Discoveries, which acquaint us with the Nature of God, and his Worship. In Relation to which, if we reflect upon that wretched Ignorance, and those wild Mistakes, that possessed both *Jew*, and *Gentile*, before the Dawning of the *Gospel*; we shall judge the better of the blessed Advantage that we enjoy, and put the juster Value upon it.

As for the *Heathen* Part of the World therefore, it is notorious, tho' upon natural Principles, they did make a Shift to reason themselves into a Belief of God's Existence, (for God never left himself without a Witness to that) yet they were most miserably at a Loss about his Nature, they had gross, and unworthy Conceptions of him, not suitable to his Majesty, and Excellency, not consistent with his essential Perfections.

LET *Tully* be the famous Instance, who after he had put as good Words, and Reason into the Mouth of *Balbus* the *Stoic*, as a *Heathen* well could speak, to prove a Deity; introduces him again, attempting  
to

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to explain the Nature of the Being he had SERM.  
been asserting; but in this he falters I.  
shamefully, not being able to raise his  
Thoughts higher than an \* *Anima Mundi*,  
a Sort of subtle material Principle, pervading, and actuating the Universe: A Notion so idle and precarious, that it served only to weaken his former Proof, and render the Thing he had contended for, more questionable.

No less injurious were they generally speaking, to the Unity of the Godhead. For how ridiculous is the Genealogy of the Gods, as it is deduced by † *Hesiod*, and how prodigious the Number. Nay, *Varro* the learned Roman, as ‡ *Tertullian* remarks, reckons up no less than three hundred several *Jupiters*. Though St. § *Austin* tells us that he himself was inclinable to think there was but one.

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\* Lib. 2. de Naturâ Deorum, p. 204. Edit. *Hon. Stephan.* Paris 1538.

† Vide *Ætiosorum*. *Hesiod*.

‡ *Tertulliani* ad Nationes, Lib. 1. p. 48. Edit. *Rigaltii*.

§ *Augustini* de Consensu Evangelistarum, Lib. 1. Tom. IV. Op. Edit. per *Theologos Louvanienses*, p. 147. & alibi.

However,



SERM. However, both the Learned and Vulgar  
 I agreed in worshipping as many, as Super-  
 stition could feign a Being, or find a Name  
 for. The Ghosts of dead Men, infamous  
 while they lived, for all Manner of Wick-  
 edness, and Villany; Beasts and creeping  
 Things, Trees and Rivers; nay, mere *Non-*  
*Entities*, under the fictitious Names of  
 Fortune: And even Vice itself, under the  
 venerable Title of Impudence.

AND such as were their Gods, such also  
 were the Rites of their Religious Worship,  
 irrational, brutish, vitious, detestable and  
 barbarous. Witness the beastly Mysteries  
 of *Bacchus* and *Venus*; and that most in-  
 humane Practice of offering Men, Wo-  
 men and Children, a bloody Victim to their  
 cruel Deities.

AND it is apparent enough from these  
 Instances, (and many more that might be  
 produced) how deplorably ignorant the  
*Heathens* generally were, of the Nature of  
 the one true God, and that Divine Wor-  
 ship, which properly belongs to him.

As for the *Jews* in the next Place, it  
 must be own'd, that they were not alto-  
 gether Strangers to these Matters. For  
 they

*Darkness rather than Light.*

II

they were Witnesses to many of God's SERM.  
wonderful Works, they were the Care of I.  
his peculiar Providence: Nay, they were  
in Covenant with him, and under immediate Subjection to him, governed by Laws of Divine Institution, which (besides other Things suited to the Genius, and State of that People) contain'd very express, and punctual Directions concerning the Worship of the supreme God, and all Things thereunto pertaining.

AND yet notwithstanding, they took up with very lame imperfect Notions of that God, who had so often *made bare his Arm*, in their Defence, and so many various Ways manifested himself to them. For they in Derogation to God's infinite Justice, and Mercy, and in Confidence of their own undeserved Privileges, vainly thought that he was *the God of the Jews only, and not of the Gentiles also*: And upon this Account they magnify'd themselves without Measure, and hated, and despised all others.

AND yet, for all the boasted Peculiarity of the Relation, that they did bear to  
God,

SERM. God, they most shamefully revolted from

I. him, and in high Dishonour to his sacred Name, set up the Gods of the *Heathens*, out of whose Hands they had been miraculously deliver'd, as his Rivals in that Divine Worship, that was incommunicably due to him alone.

ONE would have thought indeed, that God's revealed Will had been express enough to the contrary: But yet they were so vain in their Imaginations, that they either did not see it, or else wilfully overlook'd it.

AND when God in great Condescension to their Infirmities, instituted the ritual Part of his Worship, on purpose to reclaim them from Idolatry, to keep them so constantly and fully employ'd in his own Service, that they might not go a *Whoring after strange Gods*: They still mistook the gracious Intent of his Providence, and neglected their own Duty, even when they seem'd to themselves to be most exact in performing it. For they dwelt upon the mere Surface, the naked Letter of the Law, without searching into the inward, and spiritual Meaning: They observed the ceremonial



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remonial Part with a great deal of Scrupulosity; not so much as considering, never once labouring after that Purity of Heart, and Sanctity, and Perfection; which these outward Symbols did mystically represent, and primarily intend.

So far were the *Jews* themselves from being clear, or fix'd in the true Notion of the God *Jehovah*, in whom they presumed to claim (as it were) the sole Propriety. So far were they from worshipping him regularly, according to his own Institution, or answering the true End of it, tho' they had his written Law for their Guide, and Instructor.

BUT see the happy Difference, the great Preeminence of the *Gospel Revelation* in this Respect, whereby all our Notions of God, are clear'd up, and settled, and guarded against all Mistakes, (but such as are wilful) both in Speculation, and Practice.

FOR the *Gospel* represents God to us as he is, a Spirit perfectly simple, pure, and immaculate; in Essence indivisibly one, and yet in Subsistence inconceivably three; *For there are three that bear Record in Heaven,*

SERM. *Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the*

I. *Holy Ghost: And these three are one.* It represents him as a Being, absolute in all Perfection, of infinite Truth, Goodness, Wisdom, Power, Justice, Mercy, &c. It represents him as the great Creator and Preserver, the wise Governor, and Sovereign Judge of the whole World, and the compassionate Saviour, and Redeemer of Mankind: In a Word it represents him all lovely, and venerable, and worthy to receive all possible Honour, and Glory, and Blessing, and Adoration.

AND suitable to this Representation of the Divine Nature is the Worship that the *Gospel* prescribes. For our *Evangelist* tells us, that *God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in Spirit, and in Truth:* that is, in the Integrity of the Heart and Affections, and not in mere outward Formalities; in which the mistaken *Jews* laid the whole Stress of their Religion.

BUT we *Christians* are better instructed; we have learnt that the Imitation of the Deity, in all his communicable Perfections, is the greatest Honour that we can do unto him;

Jo. iv.  
24.

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him; and therefore we are exhorted *to be* SERM.

*Followers of God as dear Children, to be* I.

*pure as he is pure, and holy as he is holy,*  
*and perfect as he is perfect.* And that no-

thing might be wanting to make our Religious Services well accepted in his Sight; we are directed to offer up all our Prayers and Praises, in the meritorious Name, and thro' the powerful Mediation of his only begotten Son, one in Nature, and equal in Glory with himself, in whom, and at whose Intercession, he is, and always will be entirely well pleased. And this is one noble Discovery, that we owe to the *Gospel Revelation*; after which natural Reason could but grope as it were in the Dark, and which in the Twilight afforded to the *Jews*, was far from being clearly, and perfectly discerned.

*Secondly*, We are indebted to the *Gospel* for another very considerable Discovery, that acquaints us with God's wise and wonderful Counsels, concerning the Redemption of Mankind.

AND here again the Eye of natural Reason was altogether benighted: It might perhaps with strict, and wistful Attention, have



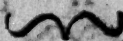
SERM. have just Light enough to have some Marks

I. of its own Ruine, some tokens of that  
 Degeneracy and Corruption, into which humane Nature is sunk: It could not indeed but be sensible in some Measure, of the sad Load of Guilt, that the Soul of sinful Man labours under; and the black Cloud of Despair, with which it is overcast.

BUT what Comfort is it alas! to see and feel one's Misery, and yet not know how to get rid on't. And what Method could Nature dictate to atone its own Guilt? From what Principles could Reason collect any Assurance of Pardon, at the Hands of an injured, and incensed God? Nature indeed might plead its own Frailty, *i. e.* in other Words, impeach God himself, for making Man a free Agent: And Reason might alledge, that God is infinitely merciful: But then Reason must allow, that God is equally just, and holy, and that these his Attributes are at perfect Unity with themselves, and act in perpetual Harmony together. And here Reason must needs be at a Stand; or if it can conclude any farther, it must conclude no less, than that a God equally holy, and just, and merciful,

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ciful, cannot be supposed to extend his S E R M.  
Mercy to the Sinner, without some pre- I.  
vious Satisfaction, and Reparation to the   
Honour of his Justice, and his Holiness :  
But what this Satisfaction should be, en-  
tirely depends upon the Will of God, which  
no Penetration of Reason can ever sound,  
any farther than he himself is pleased to  
reveal it. And it will appear in the Pro-  
cess of the Argument, that we *Christians*  
can fairly appeal to very antient Promises,  
Predictions, and Prefigurations, directly  
pointing at this very Thing.

AND were not the *Jews*, it may very pro-  
perly be ask'd, interested in all these? Yes,  
doubtless they were: For to them they  
were first deliver'd, and by them transmit-  
ted to us, and therefore, 'tis hardly credi-  
ble, that they themselves should remain in  
Ignorance of a Truth, that so nearly con-  
cerned them.

NOR did they remain in perfect Igno-  
rance; they had a distant, and indistinct  
Prospect of the *Messiah* that was to come,  
and a constant Expectation of his Coming;  
and trusted in him as the *Redeemer* of *Is-*  
*rael.*

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C

BUT

SERM. BUT then it is to be observ'd withal,  
 I. that the *Jewish* Dispensation, as such, could not afford Ease, or Peace to guilty Consciences, or support them with the Assurance of God's Pardon. Propitiatory Sacrifices were appointed indeed, but not in all Cases, nay not for the most heinous and presumptuous Offences, which most stood in need of Atonement. And even where they did take Place, the mere *Blood of Bulls, and of Goats* could not purge the inner Man, nor wash out the moral Stain of Sin; it could only satisfy for the Temporal Penalty. 'Tis true the legal Sacrifices had a farther View, and a higher Aim, which was to typify the Sufferings, and the Death of the *Messiah*: But then this is what the Law did not explain to them; and 'tis the Nature of a *Type* to be somewhat obscure, 'till the Presence of the *Antitype* makes the Resemblance more discernible. And hence it came to pass, that the *Jews* missed by an Error, that was fatal to them, stuck close to the Letter of the Law, without enquiring into the mystical Meaning; and whilst they amused themselves with the Shadow, let go the Substance.



It is also true, that the *Prophets* frequently described the *Messiah*, and characteriz'd him as a *Saviour*, and a *Deliverer*; and amongst the rest *Isaiah* most expressly. *And the Redeemer shall come to Si-* SERM. I.  
*on, and unto them that turn from Transgres-* Chap. lix. 20.  
*sion in Jacob.* But the *Jews* being a gross, and carnal People, and chiefly affected with Things Temporal, had lost all Sense of their spiritual Bondage, and therefore they foolishly misinterpreted all such like *Prophecies*, of a final Deliverance from all Captivity, and Persecution, and a glorious Re-establishment of their Kingdom, and Polity, under the Reign of the *Messiah*. So little at last did they understand (with all these Helps) of the Mystery, or Means of Man's Redemption.

BUT blessed be God, this Mystery *which was kept secret since the World began*, is now made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the *Prophets*, according to the Commandment of the everlasting God, made known unto all Nations, for the Obedience of Faith. The *Gospel* gives a full, and clear Account of all the Steps of this stupendous Transaction: We are comforta-

SERMON. bly assured in the Words a little before the

I. Text; *That God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life.* And from the same

† Ep. ii.

1, 2.

Hand we are inform'd, that *if any Man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, and he is the Propitiation for our Sins, even the Sins of the whole World:* And that we might be satisfied, that this Propitiation is available with God, to obtain our Pardon; it is again declared, *That if we confess our Sins, God is faithful, and just to forgive us our Sins, and to cleanse us from all Unrighteousness.*

1 John i.  
9.

WE may depend upon it, for God has graciously entitl'd us to it, by Virtue of the federal Promise, that he made to our Mediator, and Advocate; and *he is faithful, who has promised.*

THIS therefore is the explicate Doctrine of the Gospel, and 'tis a faithful Saying, and worthy of all Acceptation, that *Jesus Christ came into the World to save Sinners.*

So that the Method of our Salvation is cleared up to us, beyond a Doubt of the Possibility.

FOR

*Darkness rather than Light.*

21

FOR we cannot doubt of the Sufficiency SERM.  
of the Ransome paid, nor of the Efficacy I.  
of the Atonement made, since it is no o-  
ther than the *precious Blood of Christ, the*  
*Blood of the everlasting Covenant*, as 'tis  
called (in the 13<sup>th</sup> to the *Hebrews*, v. 20.)  
nay, *the Blood of God himself*, as the Scri- Acts xx.  
pture warrants us to speak. 28.

NOR can we doubt, but that *Jesus* is  
the Person designed by God to accomplish  
this mighty Work: For he is the direct  
*Counterpart* of all those antient *Types*, and  
*Figures*, and *Adumbrations* of the *Messiah*,  
that were contain'd in any of the legal  
*Ceremonies*, or exhibited in the *Lives*, and  
*Actions* of Men, famous in their *Genera-*  
*tions*; (such as *Isaac*, *Aaron*, *Moses*, *Jo-*  
*shua*, *David*, and several others) and that  
will be famous in all that shall succeed,  
wheresoever this Gospel shall be preach'd.  
And he also is the exact Complement of all  
those celebrated Predictions, which the  
*Jews*, whilst they were yet unfulfilled, un-  
derstood of the *Messiah*, which have since  
been verified to a Tittle in him; and never  
were, in any other besides him.



SERM. THE Family of which he descended,  
 I. the extraordinary Manner of his Conception, the Time and Place of his Birth; the Usage, and Reception that he met with in the World, his personal Endowments, and his public Character, his Death, and Resurrection; are the very same in plain, and unquestionable *History*, that had been represented of old in *Prophetical* Description. So that it must of Necessity be granted, that this is he of whom *Moses* in the *Law*, and the *Prophets* did write. Oh blessed therefore are the Eyes which see the Things that we see; (for even the *Prophets* that wrote of them did not see them with the Clearness, that we do in the Meridian Light of the *Gospel*.) Blessed are the Ears that hear the Things which we hear; but blessed above all, are the Hearts that receive, and retain them, and bring forth Fruit with Patience.

Luke viii.  
 15.

Thirdly, ANOTHER happy Discovery, that is owing to the *Gospel Revelation*; is that which acquaints us, with the whole Sum, and Substance, and Extent of our Duty, and enforces it by the best Motives to Practice.

FOR

FOR here also, the Information given SERM. I.  
in from unenlightened Reason, was miserably defective; for there is no such Thing as a perfect I will not say, but even as a tolerable System of Morality to be met with amongst the *Heathens*; none without some remarkable Flaw, or Blemish.

LOOK into the Prescripts of the sagest *Lawgivers*, and the Writings of the gravest *Philosophers*, and you still find something, or other allow'd and practis'd, that is impious, and unwarrantable. \* *Lycurgus* for Instance, in his Laws countenances, and encourages Theft, and Community of Wives, and exposing of new born Infants, that were not lively, and lusty; and yet *Plutarch* his *Biographer* heaps his Commendations upon him, without any Censure or Abatement. † *Plato* pleads likewise for the Lawfulness, and Conveniency of having their Wives in Common. And *Socrates* and *Cato*, avow'd the same in Practice. Fornication was look'd upon as a

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\* *Plutarch. Lycurg. Edit. Paris Vol. I. p. 49. &c*

† *Plato de Republic. Lib. 5. To. II. Op. Edit. Serrani, p. 467. 461. 466. To. III. Op. p. 18.*

SERM. venial Thing, and upon some Occasions

I. patronized, and defended. Self-Murder was generally esteemed lawful, and in the Case of *Cato Uticensis*, unreasonably applauded by most of the *Roman* Writers. Revenge was judged to be honourable, and Forgiving, the Mark of a puny Spirit.

THESE, and such like were the Morals taught by the *Heathens*, and it was as high as they were able to climb, by the Help of such weak Motives, and Inducements to be virtuous, as they commonly proposed to themselves. For they had little else in View, to spur them on to the Practice of Virtue, besides the Desire, and Expectation of a little empty Fame, and a surviving Memory.

THE Immortality of the Soul, and a future State of Rewards, and Punishments, they were but very faintly, (if at all) persuaded of. Some of their *Philosophers* indeed, took it upon blind Tradition, and others were willing to send their uncertain Guesses, and their Wishes after it: But they all wanted Arguments to support a rational, and well grounded Assent to it.

And



*Darkness rather than Light.* 25

And it is particularly observable, that SERM.

\* *Tully* himself, when he is arguing strenuously for it, and seems to be mightily flush'd with the Hopes of it, frequently drops the Thing in Quest; and contentedly exchanges it for the airy Phantome of immortal Glory, which of all Things he courted, and coveted. I.

BUT tho' the *Heathens* were thus slenderly provided, both as to the Precepts of Virtue, and the Motives to it; yet we shall find the *Jews* sure better furnished. And so undoubtedly they were, under the Direction of a *Law* instituted by God himself; and that Law *St. Paul* tells us, was *holy, and just, and good*. It must needs be so, the moral Part of it; for it is not to be conceived, that the Righteous God should command, or countenance any Thing that is simply Evil. But yet in the *Judicial* Part of it, some Things are permitted (as *Divorce* in Particular) not perfectly the best: But this was for the *Hardness* of their Rom. vii.]  
12. *Hearts*, as our *Saviour* tells them: And Matt. xxi.  
8.

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\* *Tusculan. Quest.* l. i.

SERM. the Design of the Law after all, was to  
 I. prevent the Inconvenience, and Mischief  
 that might arise, from such a Liberty altogether unrestrain'd; nay indeed, it was rather to prevent the Thing itself, by qualifying it with certain restrictive Conditions, than to indulge, or encourage it.

BUT though the moral Part of the Law must be allow'd, to be intrinsically good, and in its Kind also perfect; yet it labour'd ('tis plain) under an accidental Imperfection, that rendred it in a great Measure ineffectual. For at the same Time, that the ritual Institutions, and mere carnal Ordinances, are nicely described, and most strictly enjoin'd, some of them under the severest Penalties; moral Duties, 'tis to be observed, are more sparingly delivered, and not so clearly explained, nor so strongly inculcated. And this gave Occasion to an ignorant People, who had measured their Obedience by their Adherence to the mere Letter, to insist chiefly upon their ceremonial Observances, and to neglect the *weightier Matters, Judgment, Mercy, and the Love of God*; nay, to neglect almost every Duty, that was not literally,  
 and

and very plainly expressed; and moreover **SERM.**  
liable to the Cognizance of the Judges, **I.**  
and threatned with some Temporal Penalty.  Hence came those false, and forced  
Expositions of the Law, contrary to its  
true Meaning, which our *Saviour* in the  
5<sup>th</sup> of *St. Matthew*, and elsewhere, takes  
so much Pains to rectify.

ANOTHER Defect, with which the *Mosaic* Law was attended, was the want of  
a sufficient Force, to excite them to Obe-  
dience; and to give Life to their Pra-  
ctice. For they had no direct, and expli-  
cite Promise, either of the Assistance of  
God's Spirit, or the full, and free Pardon  
of their Sins: And this must needs be a  
vast Discouragement, even to their honest  
Endeavours; labouring as they did, under  
the Sense of their own natural Impotence,  
and the great Guilt that they had contra-  
cted. Besides, which is the Principal  
Thing of all, they had no clear and cer-  
tain Prospect of a future State of Retribu-  
tion; for it was not in so many Words  
expresly propounded to them in their Law,  
and they dreamt of no Happiness, but what  
was literal also.

THEY



SERM. THEY might indeed have easily col-

I. lected so much from antient Tradition, or even from rational Arguments, drawn from the very Tenour of those Promises, which they understood of things temporal; some of which were not, could not be fulfilled, even to those that were best entitled to them, in this Life: From whence the Conclusion was obvious, and necessary; that if God be true, and just; there must be another Life after this, *immortal in the Heavens*. But the Eyes of this *besotted*, earthly-minded People, were waxen so fat, that nothing but the most explicate Declaration could serve their Turn, and that they want.

AND under these, and the like Disadvantages did both *Jew* and *Gentile* lye, with Respect both to the Knowledge of their Duty, and the most powerful Incitements to the Practice of it.

BUT Thanks be to God, it is far otherwise under the *Gospel* Dispensation. The *Christian* Religion plainly teacheth, and effectually enforceth an universal Righteousness, both towards God, and towards Man. The Rule we have given us to walk by, is in  
both

both Perfection, and Efficacy, far beyond S E R M.  
all the Rules that were ever known to the I.  
World before. For *whatsoever Things are*  
*true, whatsoever Things are just, whatsoever*  
*Things are honest, whatsoever Things are*  
*lovely, or of good Report, if there be any*  
*Virtue, if there be any Praise;* these, and  
these only are the Things that the Gospel  
directs us to think upon, and do.

AND to make our Duty the more easy,  
and delightful to us, it resolves it all into  
a Principle of Love and Charity; and to  
provoke and inflame that Love the more,  
we are frequently put in Mind, that 'tis  
but a grateful, though very unequal Return  
to the marvellous, and matchless Love of  
God in *Christ Jesus.*

AND lest our natural Inability, or Averse-  
ness to do that which is good, should ei-  
ther quench our Love, or damp our Ala-  
cridy, and tempt us either to flinch from our  
Duty, or sink under it; our good Desires  
are quickned, and our honest Endeavours  
supported, by a gracious Promise of the Holy  
Spirit, to enlighten our Understandings,  
and sanctify our Wills, and guide, and in-  
fluence all our Actions; and enable us to  
perform

SERM perform an acceptable Obedience. And  
 I. that nothing might be wanting to keep  
 us steddy, and encourage us to Perseverance;  
 the *Gospel* applies itself in the most sensible  
 and affecting Manner, to our Hopes and  
 Fears, by the Proposal of Rewards, and  
 Punishments in another World; each of  
 them in Degree inconceivably great, and  
 everlasting in Duration. To sum up all  
 in St. Paul's Words: *The Grace of God  
 that bringeth Salvation hath appear'd unto  
 all Men. Teaching us, that denying Ungod-  
 linefs, and worldly Lusts, we should live so-  
 berly, righteously, and godlily in this present  
 World. Looking for that blessed Hope, and  
 the glorious Appearing of the great God, and  
 our Saviour Jesus Christ: who gave himself  
 for us, that he might redeem us from all  
 Iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar  
 People, Zealous of good Works.*

Tit. ii.  
 11, &c.

UPON the whole Matter, it is most un-  
 deniably clear, that the World is indebted  
 to the glorious Light of the *Gospel of Christ*,  
 for all the most important Discoveries in  
 Religion, whether of the Nature and Wor-  
 ship of the one true God, or his wise and  
 wonderful Counsels for the Redemption of  
 Mankind,



*Darkness rather than Light.*

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Mankind, or the Duty and Happiness of SERM.  
Man, together with the Motives, and Helps I.  
to perform the one, and the Means to attain the other.

THE Inference that we ought all of us to make from hence, is certainly this; that *since we are called out of Darkness, into this marvellous Light, we are obliged to walk honestly.*



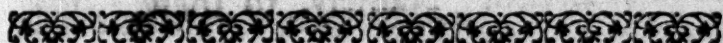
SERMON





## S E R M O N II.

The Reason why Men love Dark-  
ness rather than Light.



JOHN iii. 19.

*And this is the Condemnation, that  
Light is come into the World, and  
Men loved Darkness rather than  
Light, because their Deeds were  
Evil.*



IN Speaking to these Words, S E R M.  
I proposed, II.

I. *First*, To shew, what  
we are to understand by  
that *Light* which is here said to be come  
Vol. II. D into



SERM. *into the World.* And under this Head I have

II. endeavour'd to prove,

*First, THAT the Gospel Revelation plainly discovers, and makes known to us, all the great, and important Truths of Religion; both those which natural Reason of itself was not able to descry, or else had lost the Sight of; and also those which before were but obscurely, and imperfectly reveal'd.*

I PROCEED now to the Proof of my second Assertion. Namely, to shew,

II. *Secondly, THAT the Gospel Revelation is proposed to our Belief, with the clearest, and brightest Degree of Evidence, answerable to that other Property of Light; that, as it makes other Things visible, so it is itself the most conspicuous of all Things.*

BUT when I speak of the clearest, and brightest Degree of Evidence; I must not be understood absolutely, but only of the very best, that the Subject Matter would bear, all that was reasonable, or needful, or possible in such a Case: And that is full as much sure, as any Man can reasonably, or modestly, or even honestly desire.

And

*Darkness rather than Light.*

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And all this Evidence I will be bold to say, SERM.  
II.  
the *Gospel Revelation* most undoubtedly has: as it is contain'd in, and convey'd to us by that faithful, and impartial Account of the Life, Death, and Resurrection of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, and all his famous Deeds, and heavenly Doctrines recorded by the *Evangelists*.

AND this Evidence will open itself (as it were) to your View, with all the Advantage of Strength, and Clearness: If you please to weigh and examine,

*First*, THE moral Certainty of the *History* itself, considered as such.

*Secondly*, THE concurrent Testimony of other *Histories*.

*Thirdly*, THE remarkable Correspondence it has with the *Old Testament*, in the Completion of some very remarkable Predictions.

*Fourthly*, THE extraordinary, and infallible Attestation given to the Truth of it, by God himself. And

*First*, IF we examine into the moral Certainty of the *History* itself considered, as such; it will appear to be as indubitably great, as 'tis possible for any Thing to be,

SERMON that depends upon Relation, or Testimony,

II. as all *History* does. Nay, I will add, that  
 the *Gospel History* (even humanly Speaking, and before we come ultimately to resolve our Faith into the Testimony of God himself) carries more, and more infallible Marks of Certainty along with it, than any other *History* extant.

FOR the Credit of all *History* considered as such, rests principally upon the Qualifications of the *Historian*. And the necessary Qualifications of a just *Historian*, and one whose Testimony may safely be relied on, are,

*First*, THE Ability, and Opportunity of coming to the Knowledge of the Truth. And,

*Secondly*, AN unbiaſſed Integrity in reporting the Truth, ſimply, and nakedly, as they find it.

IF therefore I can ſhew,

*First*, THAT the *Evangelists* were ſufficiently furniſhed with the Ability, and Opportunity of knowing the Truth of what they related. And

*Secondly*, THAT their Integrity in relating what they knew, is not only clear of  
 all



*Darkness rather than Light.*

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all Suspicion; but also supported, and vindicated by stronger, and more convincing Arguments, than can be alledged in Favour of any other *Historian*. S E R M. II.

I SAY, If I can make out these two Points, I shall set the Credit of the *Gospel* (as it deserves) far above the Level of other *Histories*. And then, if I can prove,

*Thirdly*, THAT the Nature, and Circumstances of the Facts related by the *Evangelists*, are such, as render all Imposture, Fiction, or Delusion plainly impracticable, and the very Supposition of any such Practice perfectly absurd; this will advance the *Historical Truth* of the *Gospel* to the very highest Degree of Evidence; it will amount almost to a Proof, that 'tis impossible to be false; which yet is more than can in Reason be required, more than is ever insisted upon, as a Motive to assent to any other Historical Truth whatsoever. To proceed then,

*First*, I AM to shew, that the *Evangelists* were sufficiently furnished with Abilities, and Opportunities of knowing the Truth of all that they related.

SERM. How they were particularly enabled

II. for this Work, is not the present Question:  
 But that they wanted no Abilities, their very Writings may be allow'd to witness for them. For they write like Men of Understanding, gravely, and consistently; they give us a plain unaffected Account of the miraculous Conception and Birth of our *Lord Jesus*; of the Manner of his first Reception in the World, of the early Hazards he was expos'd to, the malicious Opposition he afterwards met with, especially when he begun to make his publick Appearance, and to declare the End of his Coming, and the Approach of his Kingdom. They relate in short, all the most remarkable Incidents of his Life, and the particular Manner of his Death, together with his Resurrection after three Days, and his Ascent into Heaven after forty, and the Descent of the Holy Ghost at the Day of *Pentecost*, imparting the Gift of Tongues to his *Apostles*, and thereby empowering them to propagate his Doctrine as they did, with incredible Expedition, and Success in all the Nations, and Languages upon Earth.

*Darkness rather than Light.*

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THINGS very strange and surprizing, it SERM.  
must be confess'd these are; but they are II.  
told with an Air of Seriousness, and Sobriety, and Frankness, and Openness, as if the Men knew well enough what they said, and knew the whole Matter of Fact to be certainly, and incontestably true.

AND no Doubt they had Opportunities enough, (and made Use of them) to inform themselves with all Exactness. For they were Inhabitants of the Countrey, that was the Scene of all these Wonders, and lived at the Time when they happened: And none of these Things were done in a Corner, they were all public, and notorious, and known to every Body, that had but the common Curiosity to observe, what was rare, and unusual.

BUT sure the *Evangelists* themselves must be well informed of all Particulars: For two of them, *St. Matthew*, and *St. John*, were of the Number of the earliest Followers, and more immediate Retainers of the Person, whose Actions they record: And therefore they must have frequent Opportunities to behold his Miracles with their Eyes, and to hear the Oracles of his  
D 4 Mouth,



S E R M. Mouth, and to receive direct Satisfaction

II. from most of their Senses. And St. *John* accordingly fortifies his Testimony with

*1 John i. 1.* this very Assurance; *That which we have heard (saith he) which we have seen with our Eyes, which we have looked upon, which our Hands have handled of the Word of Life, that declare we unto you.*

AND though St. *Mark*, and St. *Luke* were not of the Number of the twelve, nor perhaps of the seventy Disciples; yet 'tis allow'd on all Hands, that they were early Converts to the *Christian* Faith, and fellow Labourers too; the one with St. *Peter*, and the other with St. *Paul*. And therefore 'tis more than probable, that they themselves had a considerable Part in the *Acts* of the *Apostles*, or least wise, that they were both Eye, and Ear-witnesses to many wonderful Passages therein recorded. And for other Matters, without all Peradventure, their intimate Conversation with those that had been Eye-Witnesses from the beginning must afford them the Advantage of a very full and particular Information: And this St. *Luke* professes in the Preface to his *Gospel*. *It seem'd good*  
to

*Darkness rather than Light.*

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*to me also, having had perfect Understand- SERM.  
ing of all Things from the very first, to II.  
write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus. That thou mightest know the Cer-  
tainty of those Things wherein thou hast been  
instructed.*

WE have all imaginable Reason there-  
fore to believe, and none at all to doubt,  
that the *Evangelists* were furnished with  
sufficient Abilities, and Opportunities to  
know the Truth of what they undertook  
to relate, as being the immediate Disciples,  
and Followers of *Jesus*, Eye-Witnesses to  
his Miracles, Ear-Witnesses to his Do-  
ctrine: Or else punctually informed of  
both, by those that were so. And (which  
is farther observable) all of them unani-  
mously agreeing in the same plain, unarti-  
ficial Account of Things, without any ma-  
terial Difference, or Variation; without a-  
ny to be sure, but what is rather an Ar-  
gument of their honest, artless Care, and  
Knowledge, than any Detection of their  
Ignorance, or Inconsistency of their Wri-  
tings: So far therefore, they must in all  
Justice pass for *Historians*, as well quali-  
fied as need to be.

*Secondly,*

SERM. Secondly, THE next Point to be confi-

II. dered, is their Integrity in relating what they are supposed to know to be true, simply, and nakedly as they found it. And here again, they are clear from all Colour of Suspicion; nay, they have done more indeed to convince the World of their unbiaſſed Sincerity, and religious Adherence to the Truth, than ever any *Historian* beſides; ſo that there is not ſo much as Room left to faſten the contrary Suspicion upon them.

ENQUIRE into their whole Character, and Deportment, and you'll find it perfectly clear, without the leaſt Flaw, or Blemiſh, from one End to the other.

TAKE them at their Beginning, and they appear to have been plain, uneducated Men, not poliſh'd by the Acquiſition of the Arts, and Sciences, not practiſed in any Sleight, or Cunning, beyond that of catching a few filly Fiſh; and therefore of all others the unfiſteſt, and unlikeliſt Men ro ſet up for Forgers of *History*, and to rack Tales together of their own Invention, ſo ſubtly concerted, as to impoſe upon the moſt inquiſitive, and diſcerning in  
the



*Darkness rather than Light.*

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the Age that then was, as well as in all SERM.  
that have succeeded. II.

AND if their Subtlety had been greater than it was, their Probity was still too great to be concern'd in such Practices; they had other, and better Instructions from that Master, in *whose Mouth no Guile was found*. And his Doctrine they professedly taught, and his Example they proposed to follow: And the Foot-steps of the one were as discernible in their Lives, as those of the other are still in their Writings: Nor could their most malicious Enemies ever charge them with any Kind of Prevarication, or sinister Action, contrary to that godly Sincerity that they professed.

It were highly injurious therefore, as well as unreasonable once to imagine, that they should designedly falsify, in the *History* of Things, that they pretended to know upon the most certain Grounds, and to relate with the strictest Truth: Nay, that they should ground their very Religion upon a Lye, and take a great deal of Pains to cheat others, into the Belief of what they knew to be an utter Falsehood of their own Devising.

PEOPLE

SERM. PEOPLE don't use to be so unaccountably

II. wicked as this comes to; and strangely  
 ~~~~~ unaccountable it would have been indeed  
 in them, who had no Manner of Temptation to draw them into so plain a Snare. They could propose no temporal Advantage to themselves, nor Profit: For from the Time they first gave up their Names to *Christ*; *they quitted all, and follow'd him*; and without any farther Care for themselves, dedicated their whole Lives to his Service, without so much as the Expectation of any present Reward. Not Honour: For the Name of *Christ* crucified, was Matter of Scandal to the *Jew*, and Derision to the *Gentile*; and the Professors of *Christianity* were held in the utmost Derision, Contempt and Hatred by Both. Not Pleasure, lastly, unless it could be reckon'd a pleasant Thing to be perpetually expos'd to the Malice, and Rage of their cruel Enemies, and to suffer a thousand Torments, and Deaths. 'Tis true, the *Apostles*, and first Planters of the *Gospel*, did find a Pleasure, even in Suffering; *they rejoiced, that they were counted worthy to suffer Shame for the Name of Christ. And though they were*
 well

Acts v. 41.

Darkness rather than Light.

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well aware, that Bonds, and Afflictions did SERM.
still abide them, wheresoever they went; II.

yet none of these Things moved them, neither did they account their Lives dear unto themselves, so that they might finish their Course with Joy, and the Ministry which they had receiv'd of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the Grace of God; and accordingly all, or most of the Evangelists, and Apostles, and the immediate Disciples of our Lord, did finish the Course of their Ministry, by joyfully sealing the Truth of what they testified, with their dearest Blood: But then this is the noblest Confirmation, that they could possibly give to the Truth of their Testimony; the very highest, and strongest indeed, that any Testimony, humanely speaking, can be capable of: It is in short, a Vindication of their Integrity, beyond the Possibility of a Contradiction.

FOR nothing less than the firmest Persuasion, and fullest Conviction of the Truth, and the heartiest Concern for it, could inspire Men with Constancy, and Courage; to expend their Lives in its Defence. It is not to be supposed, it cannot be conceiv'd, that

S E R M. that Men should be so false to their own

II. Interests, as to conspire to impose a Lye upon the Belief of the World, at the Expence of their own Blood; and that they should continue all to a Man, inflexibly firm to so wicked, and so wretched a Cause; and not one of them have Honesty, or good Sense enough, to disabuse himself, and others, by the timely Discovery of such an unreasonable, and unnatural Confederacy.

'Tis so monstrously incredible this, that the very Mention of it establishes the Credit of the *Gospel History*, and gives it a manifest Advantage, in Point of Certainty, above all other *Histories*; because the Authors witnessed the Truth of it with their own Blood; and are therefore the most unsuspected Witnesses, and dignify'd with the Title of Martyrs on that Account. And as it cannot enter into a Man's Thoughts, that any one should be content to sacrifice his very Life for the Sake of a known Lye; so there is no other *Historian* that we know of, besides the *Evangelists*, that has run the like Hazards, or exposed himself to certain Death, to gain Credit to the Truth.

This

This is a Mark of Distinction reserved to S E R M.
the *Gospel History* alone; whose Truth will II.
appear to be indubitably clear, and to stand
upon the solideſt Grounds of moral Cer-
tainty. If

Thirdly, It be conſider'd, that the Na-
ture, and Circumſtances of the Facts rela-
ted by the *Evangelists*, are ſuch as render
all Impoſture, Fiction, or Deluſion plain-
ly impracticable, and the very Suppoſition
of any ſuch Practice perfectly abſurd.

FOR the Facts related by the ſacred *Hi-
ſtorians* are moſt of them public, and no-
torious, obvious to be enquired into, and
eaſy to be known if true, and as eaſily de-
tected if falſe.

THEY tell us in particular of ſome
Things very remarkable, ſuch as were the
ſeveral Accidents that happened about
our *Saviour's* Birth, and uſher'd him into
the World. The extraordinary Taxation
that carried his Mother to *Bethlehem*, where
Chriſt was to be born; the mean Accom-
modation ſhe was forced to take up with
when ſhe fell in Travail; the Viſit of Ho-
mage paid to the new born Child, by the
wiſe Men from the *Eaſt*, who were con-
ducted

SERM. ducted to him by a Star; the hasty Removal of *Joseph*, and *Mary*, (with the Child) into *Egypt*, to preserve him from the bloody Hands of *Herod*; and *Herod's* barbarous Cruelty, in causing all the Infants from two Years old, and under, to be slain throughout all the Coasts of *Bethlehem*, and the like.

Now all Facts that are thus related, and described, with the particular Circumstances of Time, and Place, and the several Occasions, and Motives, that influenced the Persons concerned in them; are very easily convicted of Falsehood, when they are false.

AND therefore, it is not to be imagined, that any *Historian*, not perfectly destitute of common Sense, as well as Prudence, should take Pains to be so particular, and circumstantial, on Purpose to expose himself, and invalidate the Credit of all he says; as most certainly he will, if he takes the Confidence to report a downright Falsehood, and then leaves it naked to the Eye of every Enquirer. It is the strongest Presumption in the World therefore; that that Relation is true, that is thus plainly, and simply

simply told, without any Disguise, or Con-
cealment; because if it be not true, it ne-
cessarily almost discovers itself, and so puts
an End to the *Imposture*.

S E R M.
II.
~

AND in this plain, and honest Method
is the *Gospel History* written; nay, some
of the Facts are such, and so circumstan-
tiated, that 'tis impossible, but they must
have been detected, and the Relaters of
them sufficiently confounded, if they had
been otherwise than true. Thus for In-
stance, the giving Sight to the Man that
was born blind, and the restoring *Lazarus*
to Life, after he had been four Days dead;
are Facts, as we find them related in the
Gospel, that were very nicely observed, and
enquired into by the *Jews*, at the Time
when they were done. And if there had
been any Juggle or Collusion in these Ope-
rations, the vigilant Eye of Malice could
not have fail'd of the Discovery. But in-
stead of this, they with Envy, and Regret
confess the Reality of these, and his other
Miracles, but blasphemously ascribe them
to some *diabolical* Power.

AND we may be sure, that such base,
and malicious Misrepresenters of our Sa-

SERM. viour's Actions, were too diligent Observers of him, to let any Thing escape, that could afford them the least Matter of cavilling Censure.

BUT it was all but groundless Cavil, as may be seen particularly in the last feeble Effort that they made to discredit the *Apostles* Testimony of our Lord's Resurrection: Which Testimony, if it had been false, might have been disproved with Abundance of Ease; nay, it must have been disproved, if they had but repair'd to the *Sepulchre*, and satisfy'd their Eyes, that the Body was still there (if indeed it had been there) safe, and undisturb'd.

BUT when, notwithstanding all their Care, and Watchfulness, our Lord was risen indeed, and appear'd unto several, then they betook themselves to that very idle, ill-concerted Story, which they suborned the Soldiers to tell; that *his Disciples stole him away by Night, whilst they slept*; and yet, if they were asleep, how could they be sensible of what was done the meanwhile, how could they tell that he was not risen?

AND

Darkness rather than Light.

§ 1

AND if there had been any Ground for S E R M.
that Report, no Doubt they would have II.
done their utmost to compleat the fortunate Discovery, especially when they were provok'd to it so soon after by his *Disciples*. For they stuck not to declare to the Face of the *Priests* themselves; *The God of our* Acts vi. 30, &c.
Fathers hath raised up Jesus, whom ye slew,
and hanged on a Tree; him hath God ex-
alted with his right Hand, to be a Prince,
and Saviour; and to give Repentance to Is-
rael, and Forgiveness of Sins; and we are
his Witnesses of these Things.

THIS, I say, was a direct Provocation to them, and their *sleepy Soldiers*, to make out the Truth of what had been so confidently alledged. And if it had been true, or believ'd to be so by themselves; we may conclude, that no Search would have been wanting to unravel the whole Plot, no Means left untry'd to recover, and expose the dead Body of that *Deceiver*, who *said, whilst he was alive, After three Days I will rise again*, and who, if he had been indeed a *Deceiver*, could not have passed any longer undiscover'd, notwithstanding

SERM. this pretended Contrivance of his Disciples
II. to conceal it.

 BUT the plain Truth is, there was not so much as Room for Deceit in this Case; nor is there Place for Suspicion in any of those Miracles wrought by the *Disciples*, after the Effusion of the Spirit upon them, at the *Feast of Pentecost*. For it would have been a Thing ridiculously vain in them, to pretend to the Gift of Tongues, if they had it not; at a Time when People were met together from all Parts of the World, at *Jerusalem*; by some of whom they must have been discovered, as soon as they opened their Mouths to speak. It had been altogether as vain, to pretend to the Gift of Healing without the Power; because the Diseased must needs be able to judge for themselves, whether they were reliev'd or no; and it would have been impossible to persuade them, that they were miraculously cured, when they found at the same Time, that they were not cured at all. Thus again, when they pretended to communicate the Power of working Miracles, by the laying on of Hands; had not such a
Power

Darkness rather than Light.

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Power been really convey'd by these Means, S E R M.
the Persons so deluded would soon have II.
found it out by themselves, and confuted
the pretended Disposer of a supernatural
Power, by their own Inability upon Trial,
to perform any such Wonders.

AND thus it appears, that the Condition,
and Circumstances of the most memorable
Facts related by the *Evangelists* are such;
that they must of Necessity be true, be-
cause they could not possibly be false, with-
out being discovered so to be. And since
there was no such Discovery made, we
must conclude, that they are irrefragably
true; nay, that 'tis morally impossible they
should be otherwise, which is evidently
the highest Degree of *Historical* Certainty
that can be had, and higher perhaps than
any other History can boast of. And
let thus much suffice concerning the first
and main Branch of our Evidence for the
Gospel Revelation, viz. the moral Certainty
of the *History* itself, considered as such.
I am next,

Secondly, To consider the additional E-
vidence which it receives, from the con-
current Testimony of other *Histories*, and

SPERM. the Acknowledgment of its professed Ad-
II. versaries.

THAT in the Reign of the Emperor *Tiberius*, there lived such a Person as *Jesus Christ*, is expressly mentioned by the *Roman Historian* * *Suetonius*,

AND that he suffered under *Pontius Pilate* is also asserted by † *Tacitus*, and that he cured Diseases, and wrought many wonderful Works, is acknowledged by two of the bitterest Enemies to Christianity, ‡ *Celsus* and *Julian*; nor was it ever disputed by any of our Opposers, *Jews*, or *Heathens*.

AND several of the most remarkable Occurrences recorded in the *Gospel*, are taken Notice of by Writers, who had no Intention to serve the *Christian Cause* by it. Particularly the Barbarity of *Herod* is stigmatiz'd in †† *Macrobius*, by that poignant

* *Sueton. Lib. 5. cap. 25. p. 406. Edit. in Usum Delphini. Paris:*

† *Tacit. Annal. Lib. 15. c. 44. To. II. in Usum Delphini. p. 885.*

‡ *Cels. apud Orig. contra Cels. Lib. 2. Julian apud Cyrillum, Lib. 6. contra Julian. p. 194. Lipsiæ 1696.*

†† *Macrobi. Saturnal. Lib. 2. cap. 4. p. 333. Edit. Lugd. Bat. 1670.*

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Saying used by *Augustus* concerning him; SERM.
that it was better much being *Herod's* Swine, II.
than his Son. And † *Tertullian* in his se-
cond Apology, appeals to the *Roman* Re-
gister of Books, for the Confirmation of
that preternatural Eclipse, which happen'd
at our *Saviour's* Crucifixion; and even
* *Pilate* himself, according to Custom,
transmitted an Account of his Miracles,
and Resurrection, to the Emperor *Tiberius*;
which Account also is entred upon Re-
cord at *Rome*, and appealed to, as being
there, by some of our *Apologists*.

IN short, as there are several Facts rela-
ted in the *Gospel*, occasionally touch'd up-
on by other Writers; so there is nothing
therein contain'd that is contradicted, much
less refuted, and disproved by any other
Writer whatsoever; not even by those that
wanted no good Will, and spared for no
Endeavour to undermine the Credit of
Christianity. And this is a very fair, col-
lateral Evidence, of the unquestionable

† Apologetic. cap. 21. p. 20. Edit. Rigaltii.

* Tertulliani Apologetic. Edit. Rigaltii. p. 20. or.

SERM. Truth, and Certainty of the *Evangelical*

II. History; that it has never been in this Respect cavilled at, but always allow'd, even by its fiercest Antagonists. And the Confession of such Persons, has always been reckoned considerable enough, to add to the Credit of the Thing so acknowledg'd. But,

Thirdly, ANOTHER corroborating Evidence to the Truth of the *Gospel Revelation*, is the remarkable Correspondence, that it bears to the *Old Testament*, in the Completion of some very memorable Events there foretold; and in Particular, all the Predictions celebrated by the *Jews* themselves, as containing the exact Description of the *Messiah* to come, are most punctually fulfilled, and may be plainly descry'd by every unprejudiced Eye in the Birth, and Life, and Death, and Resurrection, and Ascension of our *Jesus*. The *Messiah* was to come into the World, according to the Notes of Time mark'd out in antient Prophecies, before the *Departure of the Scepter from Judah*, and the Destruction of *Jerusalem*; whilst the second Temple should yet be standing, and the

the daily Sacrifices not yet ceased; and S E R M.
just at this *Crisis* of Time, was *Jesus* born, II.
when the Government of the *Jews* was in
the Hands of a Stranger, and tributary to
the *Romans*. And it is certain, that not
many Years after, as *Jesus* himself also
foretold; that the City of *Jerusalem* was
sack'd, and the Temple laid in *Ashes*, and
the People banish'd, and dispersed over the
Face of the wide Earth, never more to re-
turn to the Place of their former Residence,
and Worship. And 'tis remarkable, that
when *Julian* the Apostate, on Purpose to
baffle this Prediction, encouraged them to
attempt the Rebuilding of their Temple,
they were miraculously interrupted in their
Work, by a sudden Earthquake, and Erup-
tion of Fire from under the Foundations,
that destroy'd both the Building, and the
Builders; which is mentioned with Won-
der by * *Ammianus Marcellinus*, a Heathen
Historian of that Time.

* *Ammiani. Marcellin. Rer. Gest. Lib. 23. Cap. 1. p.*
350. Edit. Vales. Paris. 1681.

AGAIN,

SERM. AGAIN, the *Messiah*, as the Prophet *Mi-*

II. *cab* had foretold, was to be born at *Beth-*
lehem, a City of *Judæa*, obscure enough,
 'till rendred truly illustrious by the Birth
 of *Jesus*. And this, 'tis very observable,
 was occasion'd by a very extraordinary
Taxation, upon which every one was oblig-
 ed by the Emperor's Edict, to repair to
 the City of their respective House, or Li-
 neage. And *Bethlehem* was the City of *Da-*
vid, of whom *Mary* was descended, and
 of whose Seed the *Messiah* himself was to
 spring: So that we are happily furnished
 from hence, with a double Proof, that *Je-*
sus is the very *Messiah*; as being of the
 same Family, and by that Means, through
 the special Direction of Providence, born
 at the same Place, that had been antiently
 assigned for his Birth.

ONCE more, *Isaiab* had prophesied,
 Chap. vii. that the *Messiah* should be born of a Vir-
 14. gin, and this was most wonderfully fulfil-
 led in the Conception, and Birth of the
 holy *Jesus*. His Mother *Mary*, after she
 was espoused to *Joseph*, but before they
 were yet come together, was surprized by
 a Salutation from the Angel *Gabriel*, and
 informed

informed of the high Honour that was de- S E R M.
signed her, that she should *conceive in her* II.
Womb, and bring forth a Son, and call his
Name Jesus: But she, conscious of her
own Modesty, and Innocence, could not
but reply, *How shall this be, seeing I*
know not a Man? Then the *Angel* vouch-
safed her a more particular Satisfaction,
and said, *The Holy Ghost shall come upon* Luke i.
thee, and the Power of the Highest shall o- 31. 34. 35.
vershadow thee; therefore also, that holy
Thing, that shall be born of thee, shall be
called the Son of God. And when accord-
ingly, she was found with Child, *Joseph*
her Husband took Umbrage at it, and was
minded to put her away privily, not being
willing to make her a public Example, by
stoning her, which was the Punishment of Deut. xxii.
a Virgin betrothed, that should be found 23.
to be deflower'd. But whilst the good
Man was in this Perplexity of Thought,
he was set at Ease, by an immediate Re-
velation from Heaven. *The Angel of* Matth. i.
the Lord appeared unto him in a Dream, 20.
saying; Joseph thou Son of David, fear not
to take unto thee Mary thy Wife, for that
which is conceived in her, is of the Holy Ghost.

And

SERM. And from that Time forwards, *Joseph* was

II. entirely satisfied, and took her Home to him, and cherished her as his Wife. And his particular Care and Tenderness over the Mother, and the Child after it was born, and all his future Behaviour, do evince; that he had no Doubt remaining, concerning the Truth of this unheard of Miracle. So that all these Circumstances directly pointed at, by the antient *Prophets*; the Time when, the Place where, the Person of whom, and the Manner in which the *Messiah* was to be born; all of them, I say, are manifestly found to meet in the miraculous Birth of the blessed *Jesus*, in a Way unknown, impossible to Nature, and possible only to God, credible only upon his Word; for never was any Man born like as this Man was born.

Secondly, If we enquire farther into the whole Tenour of the Life, and Actions of the *Messiah*, we shall find the Predictions of the *Prophets*, verified to a Tittle in our *Jesus*. It will be too long to insist upon every Particular, but among other distinguishing Marks of the *Messiah*, he is described as a Person of a very mean Appearance

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pearance, and despicable in the Eyes of S E R M.
the World on that Account. This is I. II.

Isaiah's Character of him; He hath no Form Chap. liii.
nor Comeliness, and when we shall see him, ^{2, 3.}

*there is no Beauty in him that we should de-
sire him. He is despised, and rejected of
Men, we hid as it were our Faces from him;
he was despised; and we esteemed him not.*

And the Prophet Zachary descends to a Chap. ix.
Particularity concerning him, small, and ^{9.}

odd enough in itself; but therefore the
more notable in its Completion. *Behold*

*(says he) thy King cometh unto thee; lowly,
and riding upon an Ass, and upon a Colt,
the Foal of an Ass. And Jesus agreeably*

*to these Prophetical Descriptions, appear'd
in the meanest Condition, and met with
the coarsest, or rather the rudest, and most
contemptuous Rejection. Sometimes they*

*despitefully reproached him, with the Ob-
scurity of his Parentage. Whence (say they)* Mat. xiii.
54, 55, 56.

*has this Man this Wisdom, and these mighty
Works? Is not this the Carpenter's Son? Is
not his Mother called Mary? And his Bre-
thren James, and Joses, and Simon, and
Judas? And his Sisters are they not with
us? Whence then hath this Man all these*

Things?

SERM. *Things?* At other Times they despised

II. him for the Sake of his Country. *Shall*

John vii.
41, 42.

Christ (say they) *come out of Galilee? Hath not the Scripture said, That Christ cometh of the Seed of David, and out of the Town of Bethlehem where David was? And where Jesus himself also was, and might have been found, had not their Eyes been blinded with Pride, and Prejudice. For even the less knowing Multitude (but more ingenuous by much, than their Teachers) could not but acknowledge him for the Messiah, when he made his public Entry in that humble Guise, which the Prophet Zachary had so precisely foretold, even sitting upon an Ass, and a Colt the Foal of an Ass, but accompanied the mean while, with the joyful Acclamations of the People, crying, Hosannah to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord; Hosannah in the highest. Another Characteristic of the Messiah, assign'd by Isaiah, and others of the Prophets, is; that he was to be a Messenger of good Tidings, of good Things, a Preacher of Righteousness, an eminent Prophet sent from God, with a Power of working Miracles*

Matt. xxi.
9.

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racles, as the Credentials of his Commis-
sion. S E R M.
II.

AND in Assertion of the same; *Jesus*,
though he was the very Pattern of all
Meekness, assumes all this to himself;
turning in the midst of a whole Syna-
gogue to the Place of *Isaiab*, where it was
written, *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me*, Chap. lxi.
because he hath anointed me to preach the^{1.}
Gospel to the Poor, he hath sent me to heal
the broken-hearted, to preach Deliverance
to the Captives, and recovering of Sight to
the Blind, and to set at Liberty them that Luke iv.
18.
are bruised; and to preach the acceptable
Year of the Lord. And when he had rais'd
their Attention, and Admiration, by the
Recital of this *Prophecy*; he added with an
Air of Assurance, which nothing but Truth
itself could support; *This Day is this Scrip-* Ver. 21.
ture fulfilled in your Ears. And there was
so much Energy of Persuasion in his
Words, such an irresistible Authority in
the Truth, that they could not but give
Testimony unto it, by a tacit Confession at
least; and they shew themselves sufficiently
confounded at it, by their pitiful Resort,
(when they had nothing else to say) to
their

SERM. their wonted Cavil, is not this *Joseph's*
 II. Son.

Mat. xi.
 3, 4 5, 6.

~
 Vcr. 22. BUT that this very *Carpenter's Son* was able to perform, and did actually perform those supernatural Works, that were attributed by the *Prophet* to the *Messiah*, he appeals for their Conviction, even to their own Senses. For when *John* sent two of his *Disciples* to *Jesus*, with this very Question (for the Information of themselves, and others) *Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?* The Answer was grounded upon plain Fact, Go (said he) and shew *John* again those Things, which ye do bear, and see. The *Blind* receive their Sight, the *Lame* walk, the *Lepers* are cleansed, and the *Deaf* hear, the *Dead* are raised up, and the *Poor* have the Gospel preached unto them; and blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me. As who could indeed, that had but the least Acquaintance with that Prediction of *Isaiab*, by him referred to, or the Patience to compare it, with its direct Accomplishment?

AND thus, if I had Time minutely to pursue all the personal Endowments of the *Messiah*, the Badges of his Office, and his public

publick Performances; they would all be found to suit exactly with our *Jesus*, and eminently to concur in him. But to hasten,

SERM.
II.

Thirdly, ANOTHER Note of Distinction, whereby the *Prophets* marked out the *Messiah* to us, is; that he was to be a great Sufferer, and to be persecuted, even to Death; and they point also at the Manner in which he was to die. Thus according to the Prophet *Isaiab's* Description of him, he was to be a *Man of Sorrows*, and acquainted with Grief; one whom it pleased the Lord to bruise, and to put to Grief; nay, to be esteem'd by Men, as one stricken, and smitten of God, and afflicted; to be numbred with the Transgressors, and to bear the Sins of many, to pour out his Soul unto Death, and to be cut off out of the Land of the Living, &c. And his resigning Temper, his meek Deportment under all these Sufferings is likewise expressly taken Notice of. He was oppressed, and afflicted, yet he opened not his Mouth: He is brought as a Lamb to the Slaughter, and as a Sheep before her Shearers is dumb, so he opened not his Mouth.

Cap. liii.

Is. liii. 7.

SERM. THE Preparations also to his Death, and
 II. the Manner of executing it, and other Circumstances relating to it, are set down in exprefs Words; as that he should be *spit upon*, and *buffeted*, by *Isaiah*; that *Gall and Vinegar* should be given him to drink, and that his *Hands*, and *Feet* should be pierced, by the *Psalmist*; but that *not a Bone* of him should be broken, as was typified of him in the *Paschal Lamb*: That his *Garments* should be parted, and his *Vesture* disposed of by *Lot*, that he should make his *Grave* with the *Wicked*, and with the *Rich*; and the like.

Chap. l. 6.
 Pf. lxix.
 21.
 Pf. xxii.
 16.
 Exod. xii.
 46.
 Pf. xxii.
 18.
 Is. liii. 9.

ALL which Particulars were most signally accomplished in the Person of the blessed *Jesus*, who lived a distressed, persecuted Life, and had not so much as the common Refuge of *Foxes*, even a *Hole* to *hide his Head in*, but was perpetually hunted by the implacable Malice of his Adversaries, branded as a lewd Impostor, postponed to a notorious Robber, and condemned at last, as the worst of Malefactors. He was condemn'd to be crucify'd, a cruel, and ignominious sort of Death; but he had his Patience sufficiently exercised in order to it, not only by the Taunts, and

Insults,

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Insults, but by the filthy Spittle, and rude SERM.
Buffets of the Multitude, according to the II.
Prediction of the *Prophet*; for all which, 
and more, he had prepared himself in that
submissive, and resigning Prayer; *Father,*
not my Will, but thine be done. And when
he came to die, he had also the distasteful
Draught of *Gall*, and *Vinegar* offered him
to drink, mentioned by the *Psalmist*, in Pf. lxi.
whose Words he breathed out his innocent^{21.}
Soul, saying; *My God, my God, why hast* Pf. xxii. 1.
thou forsaken me? Words very expressive
of those Agonies of Grief, he then felt,
and of that Load of Despair, that guilty
Sinners must needs have sunk under, had
not he taken the Punishment upon himself.
After his Crucifixion, his upper Garment,
or his Cloak was divided into four Parts,
but his seamless Coat was kept entire; and Mat. xxvii.
disposed of by Lot, exactly according as 35.
the *Psalmist* had foretold. And when the
Soldiers, whose Business it was to assist at Pf. xxii. 18.
publick Executions, were ordered to dis-
patch him, and the two Criminals that
were executed with him, by breaking of
their Legs; they broke not *Jesus's* Legs,
because they saw he was dead already;

SERM. that so he might appear to be the true

II. *paschal Lamb*, and the *Antitype* of that, of which no *Bone was to be broken*. And yet, that not one *Iota* of the Scripture might remain unfulfilled, one of the Soldiers (to make sure Work) *pierced his Side with a Spear*: verifying what had been foretold, *They shall look on him whom they have pierced*.

Zach. xii.
10.

AND thus was he *numbred with the Transgressors*, and made his *Grave with the Wicked*, in the Estimation of his Crucifiers: For this was what they designed by inflicting this infamous Punishment upon him: This was what they upbraided his *Disciples* with afterwards: But yet to answer each Part of the *Prophecy*, he made his *Grave also with the Rich*; for *Joseph of Arimathea*, an honourable Counsellor, *begged his Body of Pilate*; and *Nicodemus* a Master in *Israel* brought *Myrrh*, and *Aloes* to embalm it with, after which it was decently entomb'd in a *new Sepulchre hewn out of a Rock*.

Mat. xxvii.
57.
Mark xv.
43.
Luk. xxiii.
50.
John xix.
38, 39.

So that *Jesus* in his Sufferings was distinguished by all the signal Tokens, by which the *Messiah* had been of old described.

bed. But to put a short End to this In-
duction at present; I add,

SERM.
II.

Fourthly, It is prophesied of the *Messiah*, that he should rise from the Dead the third Day; *After two Days he will revive us, in the third Day he will raise us up.* So Chap. vi. says *Hosea* of the People of *Israel*, who^{2.} served as a *Type* of *Christ*, in this Respect. That his *Soul* should not be left in *Hell*, nor the *holy One* suffered to see *Corruption*; so says *David* of himself in a *Figure*: But it Pf. xvi. 9. must necessarily be understood of *Christ*; that he should be highly exalted. *The Lord* (says the *Psalmist*) *said unto my Lord*, Pf. cx. 1. *sit thou at my right Hand*; and that consequently to this his *Exaltation* he should be invested, and entrusted with the *Dispensation* of very extraordinary Gifts: *Thou hast ascended up on high; thou hast led Captivity* Pf. lxviii. 18. *captive, thou hast received Gifts for Men.* All which was most gloriously accomplished in the *Resurrection*, and *Ascension* of the *Lord Jesus*, and the miraculous *Distribution* of the Gifts, and *Graces* of the *Holy Ghost*, at the Day of *Pentecost*.

AND the Application is made by *St. Peter*, and urged home, even to the Face of

SERM. the Jews themselves. *Men and Brethren,*

II. *let me speak freely unto you, of the Patriarch David, that he is both dead, and buried, and his Sepulchre is with us unto this Day: Therefore being a Prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an Oath unto him, that of the Fruit of his Loins, according to the Flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his Throne: He seeing this before, spake of the Resurrection of Christ, that his Soul was not left in Hell, neither did his Flesh see Corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all Witnesses: Therefore being by the right Hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father, the Promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see, and bear. For David is not ascended into the Heavens: But he saith of himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right Hand, until I make thy Foes thy Footstool. Therefore let all the House of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified both Lord, and Christ.*

AND this Application of St. Peter's, was so manifestly grounded upon Scripture, and
carried

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carried such irresistible Force along with SERM.
it; that three thousand Souls were im- II.
mediately added to the Church there-
upon.

AND from the Premises, I hope it may sufficiently appear; that there is very remarkable Correspondence between the *Old Testament*, and the *New*; the latter *historically* relating, and exhibiting in the Person of our *Jesus*, all the memorable Things that had been foretold of the former, and understood of the promised *Messiah*.

AND this wonderful Completion of ancient *Prophecies* in the Person of our *Saviour*, is a most illustrious Evidence to the Truth of the *Gospel*; an Evidence that is strong, and must prevail, notwithstanding all the wilful, but weak Resistance, that Prejudice, and Perverseness may be able to make against it.

FOR the Things foretold of the blessed *Jesus*, and verified in him; are Things that could not be gathered by any rational Deduction, nor guessed at by any humane Sagacity, or Foresight, nor learn'd from the *Diviner's* Art. They were Things at too remote a Distance when first foretold,

S E R M to be known by any such Means: They

II. were Things that in the Accomplishment, depended upon mere Contingencies, and Events as casual, as any Thing can be; (as was that Taxation of *Augustus*, which carried his Mother unexpectedly to *Bethlehem*, where *Christ* was to be born) upon the Election of free Agents; (for such were the *Jews*, the cruel Instruments of all his Sufferings) nay upon God's Sovereign Will, and Power; to which we must ascribe his miraculous Conception, and Resurrection.

So that the wonderful Concurrence of all the principal Circumstances appertaining to the Person, Office, and Actions of the *Messiah*, being so conspicuously seen in our *Jesus*; it must amount to an irrefragable Proof, that he is indeed that very Prince, and deliverer, whom the *Jews* had of Old, and did at that Time most impatiently expect. And an Expectation it was, so well known, and so much talked of throughout all the *East*; that it came even to the Notice of the *Heathens*, as may be seen in two of the *Roman Historians*, *Suetonius* and *Tacitus*.

AND

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AND even the *Jews* themselves, the Per-
secutors, and Crucifiers of *Jesus*, are by
crucifying him become his Witnesses; and
the Infidelity of them, and their Posterity,
adds Strength to their Testimony. For all
these Things also were prophesied of them.
And therefore in this Sense, they may en-
title themselves (if they please) to the
Building of the Tombs of the Prophets; inas-
much, as they have set up themselves for
standing Monuments (as it were) of the
Truth of their Predictions.

AND it is in Vain for the modern *Jews*
to give the Lye to their Forefathers, by
forcibly wresting those *Prophecies*, which
we understand of the *Messiah*, to quite dif-
ferent Persons, and a foreign Meaning.
For that they do in Propriety belong to
the *Messiah*, has been acknowledged by their
most learned *Rabbins*, and was antiently
the current Sense of all Interpreters. And
if they do belong to the *Messiah*, we might
make any impartial *Heathen* the Umpire
between us, if he would but take the
Pains to compare the *Gospel History*, with
the *Prophetical Writings*; whether the
most famous *Prophecies* therein contain'd,
be

SERM. be not most surprizingly fulfilled in our

II. *Jesus.*



THE Light therefore which is reflected from the antient Predictions, upon the *Gospel*, is so convincingly clear, so dazzling bright to the *Jew*, that he cannot endure even to look upon it, he is forced to turn his Eyes from it, lest he should be illuminated, and converted: Nay, it confounds him so, that it makes him his own Accuser; in that he still holds himself obliged to maintain the sacred Authority of those Writings, which directly charge him with affected Blindness, and incurable Obstinacy. Incurable Obstinacy indeed! for it may be very rationally concluded; that if the Scripture *Prophecies*, and that Completion of them, which we contend for, had been as obvious to the Notice of the People of *China*, and *Japan*, as they have been all along to the *Jews*; that they would have long since submitted to the powerful Evidence, and confess'd the Faith of *Christ*. I say, it may be rationally concluded; because it is hard to suppose, that any People should be so wretchedly stupid, and wilfully blind; but those who had already provoked God

to inflict it, as a Judgment upon them. SER.M.
For they rejected the very best Means of II.
Information, and rebelled against the clear-
est *Meridian* Light. I proceed

Fourthly, to the last, and highest Degree of Evidence, that we have for the *Gospel Revelation*, viz. the extraordinary, and infallible Attestation given to the Truth of it by God himself.

AND indeed the Accomplishment of those *Prophecies* we have hitherto insisted on, is equivalent to an Attestation from God himself. For as Things contingent, and remote, and depending upon the free Will of rational Agents, could not be foreseen at a long Distance of Time, but by the infinite Wisdom of him that knoweth all Things: So neither could they be effected, but by his Almighty Power, whose Providence influenceth, and over-ruleth all Actions, and Events, both those that are really voluntary, and those that are seemingly fortuitous. Since therefore the divine Wisdom, and Power did so illustriously display themselves, first in foretelling so many strange Occurrences relating to our *Lord Jesus Christ*, and then by
bringing

SERM. bringing them to pass by unthought of

II. Means, and in a most wonderful Manner;  this must be allow'd to be no less than a Testimony from God, that his Commission was from *Heaven*, and his Doctrine holy, and true.

BUT not to enlarge afresh upon this, we have other, and more direct Attestations to our *Saviour's* Commission and Doctrine, recorded in the *Gospel* itself; which considered as a *History*, we have already proved to be indubitably true. As

First, THE Testimony of *John Baptist*, who came before him as his *Herald*, and *Harbinger*: *He was not that Light, but was sent to bear Witness of that Light.* And he did accordingly, upon all Occasions bear Record, that he was a Person of eminent Dignity, and Authority, much superior to *himself*; that he was extraordinarily endow'd with the *Holy Ghost*, and empower'd to baptize with the *Spirit*; that he was in short, the *Christ*, that great *Prophet that was to come*, even the *Lamb of God*, and the *Son of God*.

Now *John* was himself a *Prophet*, and acknowledged, and revered as such by the
Jews;

Jews; among whom also it was a receive-SERM.
ed Maxim, that he, without farther Trial, II.
is to be received for an undoubted *Pro-*
phet, to whom another undoubted *Pro-*
phet bears Testimony; because the Testi-
mony of such a *Prophet*, is the Testimony
of one divinely inspired; that is, in Effect,
of God himself.

Secondly, ANOTHER extraordinary At-
testation given by God to our blessed *Je-*
sus; was by Visions, and Apparitions, and
Voices.

THUS for Instance, an *Angel* appeared Luke i. 31.
to his *Virgin Mother*, to give her Notice
of his supernatural Conception: And a-Mat. i. 20.
gain, in a Dream to his doubting Father,
to satisfy him concerning the same: The
Angels also divulg'd the glad Tidings of his
Birth, and sung him into the World with a Luke ii.
Hymn of Praise, and joyful Congratulation. 14.
And ever after they constantly attended
him, and ministred unto him in all his
Temptations, and Necessities; and assisted
also at his Resurrection: Nay the Holy Mat. xxviii.
Ghost itself took a visible Shape at his Bap-
tism, and was discerned by *John* the *Bap-*
tist, who testify'd of him, and said; *I saw* Mat. iii. 16.
the

S E R M. *the Spirit of God descending from Heaven*

II. *as a Dove, and resting upon him.* And at

the same Time in his Hearing, there came

Ver. 17. a Voice from Heaven saying; *Tbou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased:*

And the same Voice was heard again at his Transfiguration, saying; *This is my be-*

Mat. xvii. 5. *loved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him: Declaring at once his Person to*

be divine, and his Doctrine to be heavenly like himself, and worthy of all Accepta-

tion. And at another Time when he was praying, *Father, glorify thy Name:* He was answered by a Voice from Heaven, saying; *I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.*

John xii. 28.

Now these visible Appearances, and audible Voices, were the known Methods of God's revealing himself, and his Will to Men; Methods that the *Jews* in antient Times had frequently been accustomed to; and therefore to them they had evidently all the Force of a Divine Testimony, and ought to have been regarded as such.

Thirdly, ANOTHER extraordinary Attestation afforded to our *Lord*, and to his Mission, and Doctrine; was the Power of Miracles,

Darkness rather than Light. 79

Miracles, with which he was invested. SERM.
And he himself appeals to this, as the II.
most incontestable Evidence that could

be given: *The Works that I do in my Fa-* John x.
ther's Name (says he) *they bear Witness* ^{25. 1}

of me. And he afterwards asserts the
Divinity of his Person, and the Truth
of his Doctrine upon the same Grounds: *If*

I do not the Works of my Father, believe me ^{Ver. 37;}
not; but if I do, though ye believe not me, ^{38.}
believe the Works; that ye may know, and be-
lieve that the Father is in me, and I in him.

AND there could not possibly be any
stronger Motives of Assent than these, nor
any that were less liable to Exception.

FOR though we cannot precisely tell the
utmost Extent of Nature's Power, much
less of the *Devil's* Activity, of managing,
and improving natural Causes, to his own
wicked Purpose; though we are not suf-
ficiently aware of all the strange Things
that may be effected by such Means; yet
some Things there are, which we certainly
know cannot be effected by such Means:
And in particular we can say, that the
Miracles *Jesus* wrought, were not, could
not be so produced.

No!

SERM. No! they were most, if not all of them

II. Works, not feasible, not possible to any Power, but that of God; who only doth great Wonders, and of whom alone such Wonders were worthy. For Instance, he could discern the Thoughts, and Intentions of the Heart, which is God's peculiar Prerogative: He could *feed five hundred People with five Loaves, and two small Fishes*, leaving more afterwards in Fragments, than there was at first. And this must be by a Power not inferior to that of a *Creator*: For 'tis as easy to make a World out of nothing, as a Basket of Loaves; and nothing less than *Omnipotence* was able to do either. He could cure all Manner of Diseases, even such as had baffled all the *Physician's* Art, and such as the Patient had been born with, without any medicinal Application; with a single Word, as he did sometimes, both the deaf, and the blind; with a Touch as at other Times, nay with a Touch of his Garments only, and the Virtue thereby communicated, as he did the Woman who had the *Issue of Blood*: Nay, he could restore the Dead to Life again, at his bare Command,

Darkness rather than Light.

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Command, as he did, when he said, *Lazarus come forth*, to one that had been four Days dead and began to putrify.

II.

John xi.

THE Miracles of *Jesus* therefore are such, as do in their Greatness and in the Manner of their Performance bespeak an absolute Empire over Nature, and a Power perfectly Divine. Nor is it to be conceiv'd; though it were admitted to be possible, that the *Devil* should have any Hand in them: For he is too cunning (were he never so able) to work Miracles against his own Interest; He is too much a *Politician*, not to know, *That every Kingdom divided against itself is brought to Desolation*: And therefore he could never have employed his Skill, and Power in casting out Devils, even his own Angels, and industrious Agents for him. Nay for certain, he could never have been the Promoter of Virtue, and Holiness, and the Worship of the one true God, in Opposition to the Vanities of Idols, and the beastly Impurities of the *Heathen* Worship: And yet this was evidently the Design of *Christ's* coming into the World, and the direct Tendency of his holy *Gospel*. And therefore it must be

Mat. xii.
25.

VOL. II.

G

concluded;

SE R M. concluded, that the Hand of God was

II. with him, and that he was a Man approved of God, by such Signs, and Wonders, as none but God himself indeed could do, but such to be sure, as the *Devil* would not have done for him, if he could.

Fourthly and Lastly, ANOTHER extraordinary Attestation, which God gave to our *Saviour*, was by the Gift of *Prophecy*, with which he was eminently endow'd, and which he signaliz'd upon several Occasions. He foretold the Treachery of *Judas*, the Denial of *Peter*, and the Desertion of all the rest of his *Disciples*; the Manner of his own Death, the Time of his Resurrection, the Communication of the *Holy Ghost* after his Ascension, and the Propagation of the *Gospel* all over the World, by the Ministry of Men, in their Education mean, and illiterate enough, and furnish'd for their Work with Power from on high; and enabled to speak all Languages, as the *Spirit* gave them Utterance; the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the Dispersion of that incredulous and *stiff-neck'd* People. These and several other Things he foretold, which in the Event proved remarkably

Mat. xxvi.
21.

Darkness rather than Light.

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markably true; and which in being ful- SERM.
fill'd, some of them carried a double Pro- II.
portion of Evidence with them, that of ~
Miracles as well as *Prophecies*.

IN particular his Resurrection from the Dead, was a Work so much above the Power of any natural or created Agent, that no Man could have foreseen it of himself, unless it had been reveal'd to him by God; who alone was able to accomplish it: And therefore after its Accomplishment, 'twas a plain Demonstration, that his Knowledge, and Power were both equally divine; *Being declared* (as St. Paul Rom. i. 4. expresseth it) *to be the Son of God with Power according to the Spirit of Holiness, by the Resurrection.*

AGAIN, The Gift of Tongues was something so infinitely disproportionate to all natural Means, and indeed so utterly unattainable; that Nobody could possibly foretel it, but who could also bestow it; and therefore he that did both, must be allow'd to be infinite, both in Knowledge, and Power.

ONCE more, the prodigious Success, and Progress of the *Gospel*, by Means so seem-

SERM. ingly weak, against an Opposition so violent, and strong; was a Thing so far above all humane Probability; that Nobody would have depended upon it, but who could certainly foretel it, and Nobody could certainly foretel it, but who could overawe, and controul, all the Prejudices, Inclinations, and Interests of Mankind.

AND thus these miraculous Works were more truly wonderful for being foretold, and the Predictions were more *divinely prophetic*, because they could not be accomplish'd without a Miracle; and both together do add a double Lustre, as well as Force to the Evidence of *Christianity*.

I MIGHT here add as a Confirmation to all that has been said; that even as our Lord had promised, and foretold, the Power of working Miracles, was derived upon his *Apostles*. For besides the Gift of Tongues already mentioned, they were enabled to cure all Manner of Diseases, to cast out Devils, to strike dead, to restore to Life; in one Word, they had absolutely the Ascendant over all the Power of the Enemy: And how did they perform all these mighty Wonders? In the Name of the *crucified*

rified Jesus; at the single Mention of SERM. which, all Nature bowed its Head; and II. the very *Devils* trembled, and obey'd. An undeniable Argument this! that he himself was the *Despotick* Lord of all, in whose Name, such ample Commissions were granted, enlarged also with a Power of farther Delegation. For on whomsoever the Apostles laid their Hands, to them the Holy Ghost was given, and manifested itself by the like Signs, and Wonders: But 'tis too late now to insist farther upon these Topicks.

IN the mean while, I hope it is sufficiently plain, that the Truth of the *Gospel Revelation* is most extraordinarily attested by God himself.

AND this divine Attestation renders its Authority unquestionable, and its Certainty infallible, even as infallible as God himself is.

FOR in summing up the Evidence that has been given, it will appear; that the *Gospel History* as such, has all the Credibility that any *History* can have, and more than any other *History* hath; as being written by Men of sufficient Abilities, and unsuspected Integrity, who also seal'd to the

SERM. Truth of what they wrote, with their

II. Hearts dearest Blood. And besides, the
 Facts which they relate are many of them
 such, and so circumstantiated, (as for Ex-
 ample the Resurrection of our Lord) that if
 they had been false, it could not have been
 conceal'd, it must of Necessity have been
 discover'd; and therefore no such Disco-
 very being made, we must conclude, that
 they are certainly true.

MOREOVER, this *History* is confirm'd by
 the concurrent Testimony of other *Histo-*
ries, and the Acknowledgment of profess'd
 Adversaries.

AND then, when we come to consider it
 as a Revelation from God, it bears a re-
 markable Correspondence to the Relation
 that was given to the *Jews*, which is in-
 deed a very material Circumstance; because
 it must not be supposed, that two *Revela-*
tions, and both from God, should contra-
 dict each other. This therefore is so far
 from being the Case of the *Gospel Revela-*
tion, that it is in Effect the exact *Counter-*
part of the Revelation which went before
 it, as exhibiting the plain Accomplishment
 of antient *Prophecies*, which were by the
Jews

Darkness rather than Light. 87

Jews constantly applied to their expected **S E R M.**
Messiah, and are now remarkably verified **II.**
in our *Jesus*, whom therefore we believe
to be the *Christ*. 

AND *Lastly* to crown all, it has the direct Attestation, and Approbation of Heaven; for it was spoken of first by a Person, who had an eminent *Prophet* for his Forerunner, and Witness: Who was declared to be the Son of God, by Angels, and Voices; who had the Power of Miracles, and Prophecy for the Credentials of his divine Commission: And it was confirmed to us by them that heard him, *God also* Heb. i. 4i
bearing them Witnesses with Signs, and Wonders, and diverse Miracles, and Gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own Will.

AND what stronger, what clearer Evidence can there be than this? For 'tis manifest, that nothing that depends upon Testimony can be better attested; nay, nothing of like Nature was ever in all Points so well attested as the *Gospel*.

AND if the *Gospel* be false after all, it is a Falshood that has all the plainest, and most indisputable Marks of Truth. But it's directly inconsistent with the Veracity,

SERM. and Goodness of God, to suffer such a
 II. gross Cheat to pass upon the Belief of Man-
 kind, without so much as the Possibility
 of a Discovery. His Veracity will not per-
 mit him to bear Witness to a Lye, and to
 be instrumental in deceiving his Crea-
 tures, and that unavoidably: And his
 Goodness can never be consenting, that
 his Creatures should be unavoidably de-
 ceiv'd, in Matters of such vast Importance
 as the *Gospel* delivers. So that we have
 the same Evidence for the Truth of the
Gospel, that we have for the Veracity, and
 Goodness of God; and therefore in the
 Upshot of all, my Conclusion stands im-
 moveably firm, *viz.* that the *Gospel* Reve-
 lation, is proposed to our Belief with the
 very highest, and brightest Degree of Evi-
 dence.

THE just Inference from this whole Dis-
 course is plainly this; that having all this
 clear, and positive Evidence to the Truth
 of our holy Religion, it is the most ratio-
 nal Thing in the World to build our Faith
 securely upon it, with an entire Acquies-
 cence of Mind; and the most irrational on
 the other Hand to *stagger to and fro thro'*
Unbelief,

Unbelief, or to be moved by the Shock of S E R M.
any cavilling Objections, or puzzling Diffi- II.
culties, that may be thrown in our Way. 

FOR when we have all the Proof, that is proper in a Case, and as clear, and full, as the Nature of the Case will admit; and nothing at all that can be alledged in Disproof of the main Evidence; surely this ought to be a determining Motive of Assent, the Mind in this Situation, seems to be arrived at its natural Point of Rest; and there to abide, is the Argument of a sound Judgment.

ON the contrary, it betrays Weakness, and Irresolution, and want of a due Poise in the Judgment, to float in Uncertainty after such a Determination; to seek for more Proof, than the Case doth require, or will admit; or to yield up the Proof we are in Possession of, to certain *sceptical* Doubts, and Queries, that do not shake the least Part of our Foundation.

AND this is the very Case of *Christianity*, we have all the clearest, positive Proof, that the Nature of Things would admit; We have the indubitable Faith of *History* better supported, and corroborated, than e-

ver

SERM. ver any *civil History* was; we have the

II. wonderful Correspondence of the *Old*, and
 ~~~~~ *New Testament*, as Counterparts to each other, and we have the *Jew*, even our im-  
 bittered Enemy, by truly asserting the  
 divine Inspiration of the former; witness-  
 ing against his Will, to that of the latter:  
 We have *Prophecies*, and *Miracles* lending  
 one another mutual Light, and Strength;  
 in fine, we have all the manifest Tokens of  
 divine Wisdom, and Power, that could be  
 requisite to give Credit to a *Revelation*  
*from Heaven*.

Is there not then all imaginable Reason  
 to embrace the *Gospel* as such? And is there  
 the least Dram of Reason in the other Scale,  
 to make the Ballance dance, or totter?

Is our *History* refuted, or the least in-  
 validated? Are our Facts denied, or disputed  
 by *Jew* or *Heathen*? Doth not the Com-  
 pletion of the antient *Prophecies* by Opera-  
 tions truly miraculous, bring a Conviction  
 with it, that is scarce to be resisted? And  
 is not the weak, but wilful Resistance of  
 the modern *Jews*, by wresting those *Pro-*  
*pheties* to a foreign Sense, (which were  
 honestly understood of the *Messiah*) at  
 once,



once, a Proof of their incurable Blindness, **S E R M.**  
and Hardness of Heart; and a Verification **II.**  
of what the blessed *Jesus* expressly foretold  
of them. In one concluding Word, is not  
our holy Faith not only unshaken, but e-  
ven untouch'd by any Objection directly  
levelled against the Foundations of it?  
What is it then can leave the Mind of a  
rational Man undetermined, in this im-  
portant Matter? Or what is there to un-  
settle it, if once determined? 'Tis true,  
there are Mysteries reveal'd in Scripture,  
that far transcend our low Capacities: But  
is it any Wonder that God should reveal  
Things beyond all Comprehension? And  
is this any justifiable Cause of disbelieving  
such mysterious Truths, suppos'd to be  
reveal'd from God? Or is it any Disproof  
of the Revelation itself, when otherwise  
sufficiently attested? No certainly! this  
would be absurd in the highest Degree;  
for it would be to imagine the shallow  
Capacity of the Creature, to be equal to  
all the Depth of Knowledge, and Wisdom  
in the Creator.

It is possible, that there may be some  
Niceties in Scripture *Chronology*, not easy

SERM. to be adjusted, some Variations not easily

II. accounted for? But what if it should be  
 ~ granted, that there are some Perplexities of  
 this Sort, or even that some small *Errata*  
 were crept in, of no Moment, through the  
 Change of a *numeral* Letter, or other Note  
 of Time? But is there any Thing to e-  
 vince, that *Jesus* did not appear, when all  
 the remarkable Notes fell in together, that  
 pointed out the Messiah? Are there any  
 Calculations, that amount to a Proof, I  
 don't say, but gives Rise to the least Que-  
 stion, that he was not born, and lived,  
 and died about that Time, and in that  
 Manner, which the *Gospel* relates? Is there  
 any Contradiction set up against the Truth  
 of his Resurrection, Ascension, or the Gift  
 of Tongues, and other miraculous Powers  
 consequent thereupon? Is there any Thing  
 in short, that strikes at our Fundamentals?  
 If not, (as for certain there is not) then  
 without all Doubt, it is the most unrea-  
 sonable Piece of Folly, and Rashness, to  
 yield them up, for the Sake of any By-  
 Questions, and pitiful Cavils, that reach  
 not home to the Point.

AGAIN, What if it should be granted,  
 that

that there are Things hard to be understood, Passages in Scripture hard to be reconciled, without a great deal of elaborate Enquiry, and critical Learning? Is it therefore a reasonable Thing, that the unlearned, (or, which is worse, the *half learn'd*, and *unstable*) is it any tolerable Excuse for their Ignorance, and Instability, to wrest even these difficult Scriptures to their own Destruction, on Account of those Difficulties which they themselves are unable to resolve, and equally unwilling to see the good Office done, even by a much better Hand?

ONCE more, should I be so liberal as to grant, that there is a great Number of various Readings in Scripture, and a few such, as seem to leave the Meaning of some considerable Text something ambiguous? And what's the Consequence from hence; that there is no certain Sense to be gathered out of any Text of Scripture? That is too extravagant for any Body to say. Will it be said then, that any moral Precepts, or any Article of Faith depends wholly, and solely upon any such Passage, as thro' a Variety of Readings carries no determinate

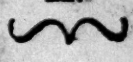
SERM.  
II.  
~~~~~


SERMON. nate Sense with it? That's more than the
 II. boldest Gainsayer can maintain, and there-
 ~~~~~ fore the weakest Believer ought not to be  
 stagger'd by it.

FOR the Foundation still standeth sure, unmoved, and immoveable; and it is the truest Exercise of our Reason to rest upon it, and the most preposterous Abuse of Reason, to depart one Hair's Breadth from it; which was the Inference drawn from the foregoing Discourse, and I hope is sufficiently made out.

FOR these Exceptions upon by-Points, do no more affect the main Conclusion, than the loosening a few Pins in the Roof, would shock the Foundation of a strong Fabrick.

AND if Mysteries, or Difficulties in a divine Revelation, are a sufficient Objection to the Belief of it, when 'tis proved so to be, by the most proper, and convincing Arguments; then there is hardly any Thing in Nature worthy of Belief. For all Nature is big with Mysteries, and Difficulties; and a Man must not believe even the Existence of Matter; because the mutual Cohesion of its Parts is a Mystery,  
 which

which those who are deepest in the Secrets S E R M.  
of Nature, cannot fathom; nay, a Man II.  
must not believe even that the Sun shines,   
because in the *Phænomena* of Light, there  
are Difficulties not yet explained by any  
*Philosopher*. But at this Rate there is no-  
thing to be believ'd, though clear even to  
Demonstration, if any collateral Doubt or  
Difficulty may be rais'd upon it; which is  
a Way, that would lose us in a Maze of  
Absurdities, and leave us afloat in endless  
*Scepticism*.

AND yet this is the modern Method of  
attacking our common *Christianity*; which  
though it has all the most indubitable  
Marks of a *Revelation* from *Heaven*, that  
it was fit for God to give, or reasonable  
for Men to desire; yet is it not without  
its Difficulties. Difficult Questions con-  
cerning Matters of an abstruse Nature, or  
of remote Antiquity; concerning nice Points  
in *Chronology*, or the Reconciliation, or In-  
terpretation of obscure Passages in Scri-  
pture, &c.

AND this being a light Sort of Armour  
that is easily put on, and soon borrow'd  
from the School of *Infidelity*; every Smat-  
terer

SERMON. terer upon this small Stok; is ready to seat

II. himself in the *Scorner's Chair*, and draw  
 ~~~~~ a Circle about him, and take his *Bible* to  
 Pieces, and treat it, as if it were a Bundle
 of *popish Legends*. Vain and impious the
 weak Attempt! *For all Flesh is Grass, and*
 1 Pet. i. 24. *all the Glory of Man as the Flower of Grass;*
the Grass withereth, and the Flower fadeth
away, but the Word of the Lord endureth for
ever. And the boldest Contradiction of the
 Sinner is so far from discrediting it, that it
 is a noble Confirmation to its Truth, and
 Power; since these its audacious (but fee-
 ble) Opposers are foretold therein, and de-
 scribed in their proper Colours. *Let us*
take Heed then, Brethren, lest there be in any
of us an evil Heart of Unbelief, in depart-
ing from the living God; and from the
Word of his eternal Truth. And let us take
 care that we be not of the Number of those,
 Heb. xix. *who draw back unto Perdition, but of them*
 34. *who believe to the saving of the Soul.* Which
 God grant, in and thro' *Jesus Christ our*
Lord. To whom with the Father and
 Holy Spirit, be ascribed (as is due) all
 Praise, Glory, Might, Majesty, and Domi-
 nion, now, and for evermore. *Amen.*

SERMON



S E R M O N III.

The Reason why Men love Dark-
ness rather than Light.

JOHN iii. 19.

*And this is the Condemnation, that
Light is come into the World, and
Men loved Darkness rather than
Light, because their Deeds were
Evil.*



THE three Points that offer S E R M.
themselves to our Observa- III.
tion, and Enquiry in these
Words, (you may remem-
ber) are these.

VOL. II.

H

I. First,

SERM.

III.

I. *First*, WHAT is meant by that *Light*, which is here said to be *come into the World*.

II. *Secondly*, How it came to pass, that Men should reject this *Light*, and wilfully shut their Eyes against it; *They loved Darkness rather than Light, because their Deeds were Evil*.

III. *Thirdly*, How just, and inevitable the *Condemnation* of such Men is; *this*, says he (that shall finally be their Judge) is the *Condemnation*, that *Men loved Darkness rather than Light, because their Deeds were Evil*.

I. As to the *First Point*, what is meant by the *Light*, which is here said to be *come into the World*; I thought it might with good Reason be understood, of the Doctrine of our *Lord Jesus Christ*, as it is reveal'd to us, in his holy *Gospel*.

AND this *Gospel Revelation*, I have endeavour'd to shew, is very aptly resembled to *Light*, as in several other *Respects*, so most eminently in these two.

THE

THE *First* is, that as *Light* makes all Things visible, so the *Gospel* clearly discovers, and makes manifest some of the most important Truths of Religion, such as were altogether unknown, or but imperfectly known before. SERM. III.

THE *Second* is, that as *Light* is itself of all other Things the most conspicuous; so the *Gospel* Revelation is proposed to our Belief with the highest, and brightest Degree of Evidence.

THE first Part of this Resemblance I have made out, by instancing in those noble and happy Discoveries concerning the Nature of God, and his divine Worship, and concerning the Redemption of Man, and his Duty, and Happiness, and the best Means, and Motives to perform the one, and attain to the other; in all which Things, the World has been marvellously enlightened by the *Gospel* of *Christ*, in Comparison of that Darkness of Ignorance, in which the *Gentiles* were involved, and that Dimness of Knowledge, which was imparted to the *Jews*.

THE second part of the Resemblance I have also made out, by producing the in-

S E R M contestable Evidence we have for the Truth
 III. of the *Gospel*; and examining it Branch by
 ~~~~~ Branch, as it consists, partly in the moral  
 Certainty of the *History* itself, consider'd as  
 such; and partly in the concurrent Testimo-  
 ny of other *Histories*, and the Acknowledg-  
 ment of its professed Adversaries; and partly  
 again in the remarkable Correspondence  
 that it bears to the *Old Testament*, and the  
 Predictions therein recorded; but principal-  
 ly in the extraordinary Attestation that is  
 given to it by God himself, in Signs and  
 Wonders, and diverse Miracles, and Gifts  
 of the *Holy Ghost*; the Power of which so  
 eminently resided in *Christ*, and was as won-  
 derfully delegated to his Disciples.

ALL which taken together, renders the  
 Authority of the *Gospel* perfectly unque-  
 stionable, and its Certainty infallible; even  
 as infallible as God himself. Inasmuch as  
 'tis utterly inconsistent with the Veracity,  
 and Goodness of God, in a Matter of such  
 vast Importance, and in which his Ho-  
 nour is so nearly concerned, to suffer a  
 Deceit, or Falshood to pass upon the  
 World, attended with all the strongest  
 Motives of Credibility, and the most indis-  
 putable

*Darkness rather than Light.*

101

putable Marks of Truth, on Purpose to lead S E R M.  
Men into Error, and confirm them in it. III.

AND since this is a Thing impossible to be supposed; it must be allow'd, that the Evidence for the Truth of the *Gospel*, is as conspicuous as *Light*, and the *Gospel* is as true, as Truth itself. All which I have proved at large in two foregoing Discourses: And the Proof was such, as I could entirely acquiesce in myself; and I think might safely be depended on by *others*.

BUT yet one Thing there is, after all that has been said, which though it does not weaken our Proof, yet it looks at first Sight, a little odd, and unaccountable: For if there are such wonderful, and such important Discoveries in the *Gospel* of *Christ*: If it contains Sayings so infallibly true, and so worthy of Acceptation: It might fairly have been expected, that all Men should come into it, as soon as once it was proposed to them. It is strange indeed, it should meet with so much Opposition, if it was accompanied with all that plain, and powerful Evidence, that is alledged for it.

SERM. AND yet it is notorious enough, that  
 III. it was at first very scornfully rejected, and  
 violently opposed by both *Jews* and *Heathens*, *Rabbins*, and *Philosophers*; and is still cavilled at, or embraced but by Halves, by some of the wise *Disputers* of *this World*.

BUT it is not difficult to account for all this: For in the *first Place* it is observable, that *Christ* himself had foretold, and forewarn'd his Apostles of that unkind Reception, and fierce Opposition, which they were like to meet with in the Publication of the *Gospel*, and had promised withal that they should surmount all these Difficulties, and be enabled to carry on their Work, with incredible Success, in Despite of all their Adversaries; and so they did. And the *Gospel* by their Ministry made its Way with irresistible Force, and took a swift Course through the World, maugre all the strongest Confederacies of Prejudice and Interest, Policy and Power, Malice and Cruelty that were united together against it. And the Completion of this last Prediction, and Promise of our *Saviour's*, is a most astonishing Confirmation of the  
 Truth



Truth of the Gospel: For nothing but SERM.  
mighty Truth itself could have prevail'd III.  
at this prodigious Rate, and forced its very  
Enemies to come in for its Witnesses; for  
so indeed they were, and Fellow Helpers  
in some Sort to the Apostles, by impotent-  
ly, and vainly opposing, what *Heaven* had  
decreed to prosper, without any humane  
Aid.

THE violent, but vain Opposition there-  
fore that was made to the Gospel at first,  
is so far from implying any want of Evi-  
dence, that it is itself an additional Evi-  
dence; and if all other Proofs were want-  
ing, a sufficient Attestation to the Truth  
of it.

BUT still, if the Evidence for the Go-  
spel was so very cogent as is pretended:  
This leads us to enquire, which was the

II. *Second* Thing to be enquired from  
my Text, how it came to pass, that it  
was not universally embraced, or that any  
should continue blind in the midst of all this  
glorious *Light*. But the Text gives a  
plain, and easy Account of this also. *Men*  
*loved Darkness* (it seems) *rather than Light,*

SERM. *because their Deeds were Evil.* And that

III. so it might come to pass, we shall soon be  
 ~~~~~ satisfied; if we consider,

First, IN General, that though the Gospel did come confirmed with the very highest Degree of Evidence, that the Nature of the Thing would admit; yet it was not such Evidence (nor was it fit it should) as would offer Violence to Men's Faculties, and make it an impossible Thing to disbelieve it, and therefore no Virtue to believe it; no! the *Gospel* has always had Reason on its Side, abundantly enough to satisfy any Man's Understanding, that is considerate, and attentive. But then 'tis in Men's own Power, and Choice, whether they will consider, and attend to it or no: They may (if they please) condemn it in the gross, unheard, and unexamined; which in all Probability was the Case of many at first, and is of some still. And even after the Understanding is clearly convinced, without any Shadow of a Doubt remaining; the Will may still hold out, and deny its hearty Assent, even to the most demonstrable Truth. And the Faith required of a *Christian*, consisting (as it does)

not

not in the bare Conviction of the Under-^{SERM.}
standing, but in the entire Concurrence, ^{III.}
and Approbation of the Will also; no
Wonder that many should be so slow of
Heart to believe; to believe a Doctrine so
unacceptable to Flesh and Blood, so op-
posite in many Parts of it, to the corrupt
Lusts, and Inclinations of Men, which
having got Possession of the Affections, and
being long indulged by habitual Practice,
were too sturdy to give Way to the naked
Force of Truth, and too dear to be sacri-
ficed to it. Men were loth to part with
their old beloved Sins, for the Sake of a
new Religion; and therefore they chose
rather to reject this inconvenient Religion
right or wrong, than to embrace it upon
such uneasy, and unequal Terms: And
thus it has been, and thus it will be; if
Men will resolve to keep their Eyes shut
(as if they will, they may) they do, and
must deprive themselves of all Benefit of
the *Light*; even the *Gospel* itself in all its
Meridian Spendour must be hid to them;
and if when they do open their Eyes, they
will look upon it no otherwise, than
through the Mist of their own inveterate
Preju-

SERM. Prejudices, and sensual Lusts: it is impos-

III. sible they should have a clear Prospect of the Truth, or that they should discern the Beauty, and Excellency of the *Christian Religion*; or if they do, that they should patiently endure the Sight of that, which was so manifest a Reproof, and Reproach to their own Practice. For as our *Evangelist* has it in the Verse following my Text.

John iii.
20.

Every one that doeth Evil hateth the Light, neither cometh to the Light, lest his Deeds should be reprov'd.

IT is no such unaccountable Thing therefore, that Men should resist the clearest Evidence of Truth, and *reject* (as St. Luke says, *Acts vii. 30.* of the Lawyers) *the Counsel of God against themselves.* But this will still be more apparent, if we enter into the Detail of those vitious Prepossessions, and evil Habits, ill Opinions, and Practices which tempted Men at first, (and have the same Influence still) to *love Darkness rather than Light*, for no other Reason but *because their Deeds were Evil*, and could not bear the Light. And

First, ONE great Obstacle, that kept back many of the *Jews*, and *Gentiles*, from discerning,

discerning, and embracing the Truth, as it is S E R M.
in *Jesus*; was their blind Bigottry, and Zeal III.
for the Way they have been train'd up in, and the unreasonable Prejudice they had taken up against our *Saviour's* Person, and his Doctrine.

Thus the *Jews* in particular, were zealous above Measure for their Law, and the Traditions of their Fathers. But so miserably blind they were, with all their Zeal; that they overlook'd, both the true Meaning, and Construction, and the main Scope, and Design of the Law itself, which was to shadow forth good Things to come, and to lead them to the Knowledge of the true *Messiah*. And though they lived in perpetual Expectation of this *Messiah*, and their Expectation seem'd to be rais'd to the Height, about the Time that *Jesus* appear'd in the World: And though he appear'd with all the distinguishing Marks of the true *Messiah*, exactly agreeing with those antient Predictions, and Types, and Figures that stood upon Record in their own Books; I say notwithstanding all this, when they saw the very Person they longed for; they could discern no *Form*, nor *Comeliness*

SERM. *Comeliness, no Beauty in him, that they*

III. *should desire him.* That is, none of that

external Pomp, and Grandeur, in which they hoped to see the *Messiah* make his Appearance, and with which they had pleased themselves so much in Imagination; that they were perfectly enraged, that a Person of such obscure Birth, and so mean a Condition should presume to take so high a Character upon him. And therefore, notwithstanding all the mighty Works that he wrought, they conspired to put an End to his Pretensions, by putting him to Death; stupidly ignorant the mean while, that as other Scriptures were remarkably fulfilled in him, so this also was written, and that thus *it behoved Christ to suffer*. And even the Men that dwelt at *Jerusalem*, and the Rulers, because they knew him not, neither the Voices of the *Prophets which are read every Sabbath Day*; they have fulfilled *them* in condemning *him*; and their *Posterity* have fulfilled them too, by being scandalized at *Christ* crucified, for the Sake of those Sufferings, of which their Fathers were the wicked Instruments. Thus did the prejudicated Zeal
of

of the *Jews*, betray them into the grossest, SERM.
but most culpable Ignorance, that ever a- III.
ny People was blinded with; and that Ig-
norance made them guilty of a most de-
testable Wickedness, first in rejecting, and
then in murdering the *Lord of Life*.

AND the *Gentiles* were as much bigotted
in their Way, as the *Jews*; and for the
same Reason great Enemies many of them
to *Christianity*. The *Philosophers* were
great Pretenders to deep Science, and Wis-
dom; and therefore the Simplicity of the
Gospel was contemptible in their Eyes.
And both they, and the Generality of the
People had a mighty Veneration for An-
tiquity, and Tradition, and as much an
Aversion to Novelties in Religion. And
therefore St. Paul was encountred at *A-*
thens, as a *Babbler*, and *Setter forth* of
strange Gods (by the *Epicureans*, and *Sto-*
icks,) when he preached *Jesus, and the Re-* Acts xvii.
surrection. The *Epicureans* were an *Athe-* 18.
istical Sect, that deny'd a Providence, tho'
they allow'd a God: That is, a supine,
and lazy Being like themselves; who were
wholly devoted to Ease, and Pleasure.
And 'tis no Wonder that they should take
Offence

SERM. Offence at the Doctrine of the Resur-
 III. rection, which supposed them accountable
 in another Life, for what they did in
 this.

THE Stoics were *Materialists*, and therefore had no Notion of the Permanency of the Soul, or any future State; and besides, they held that all Things were bound up by a fatal Necessity, and therefore had no Disposition to believe, or acknowledge God's free Goodness, and wise Providence, in sending his Son to be the *Saviour* of the *World*. And yet in him they might have seen, if they would, that gallant Sight which * *Seneca* will have to be an Entertainment fit for God himself; that is to say, "A Man of Fortitude, match'd with fore Adversity, but perfectly superior to it."

In short, all the rest of the *Philosophers* had their several Tenets, which if we had Time to examine them, would appear some or other of them to be very inconsistent with the main Principles of *Christianity*.

* *Senec. de Providentia. p. 133. Op. Edit. Lips. 1652.*

Darkness rather than Light. F I I

Besides that, the persecuted State of the *Christians* was improv'd into an Argument SERM. III.
against the Truth of their Religion, and made People not only backward to embrace it, but apt (without farther Enquiry) both to condemn, and to despise it. 

AND under all these violent Prejudices, 'tis no wonder that many should chuse to continue ignorant of so ungrateful a Doctrine, or fancy themselves to be more knowing than the illiterate Men that taught it: But 'tis truly wonderful, that amidst all these Discouragements, so many of the better, and more discerning sort of *Philosophers*, and *Orators*, as well as others, should subscribe to mere Force of Truth, and become such early Converts, as they did to the Faith of *Christ*.

AND the Power of Bigottry, and Prejudice, is not impair'd by Age, it is still, and always will be one great Impediment to the Progress of the *Gospel*, and the Reception of the Truth in the darker Corners of the Earth. And even where the Light of the *Gospel* does shine, it has ever had its fatal Effects, in obscuring, or adulterating,

SERM. rating, and perverting the Truth; and in

III. stiffening People in Error.

~ THUS for Instance, there is a Christian Church we know, in which Infallibility is the *supreme Pastor's* high Prerogative; and implicate Faith, and blind Obedience, the simple *Laick's* slavish Duty; and whilst under this Pretext, the greatest Absurdities are imposed upon them, both in Matters of Belief, and Practice; the good People are carefully bred up, in most profound, and devout Ignorance; and that Ignorance is inspirited with a furious Zeal, that makes them damn all that differ from them, or pretend to instruct them better.

THESE are the blessed Effects of *Popish* Bigottry, in Abhorrence of which, some have run blindfold into the opposite Extreme, and cry'd down all Manner of Regularity, and Order, and Decency, and Reverence in the Worship of God; as downright *Poper*y. And such popular Outcries as these, (weak as they are) were once loud, and strong enough to shake the Foundations of the best constituted Church upon Earth. Such has been the Effect of *Protestant* Prejudice.

NAY,

Darkness rather than Light. 113

NAY, there are those amongst us, who SERM.
will be called *Protestants*, though they can III.
scarce be called *Christians*; who rather
than the *Pope* shall engross all Infallibility
to himself, set up every Man for an in-
fallible Spirit of his own, and appeal to
the *Light within* them, from the Light of
the *Gospel*; and rely upon a *Christ* within
them too, instead of *Christ* incarnate. And
if any one goes about to confute them,
though by the plainest *Scripture* Argu-
ments, it is all but carnal Reasoning with
them; and they are above such *weak*, and
beggarly Elements; rich in their own Con-
ceit, of spiritual Knowledge, and imme-
diate Illumination; and therefore impreg-
nable in their Error; these are the happy
Fruits of an *enthusiastic* Zeal.

AND we meet with Instances of Bigot-
try now adays, (if without a Solecism it
may be so called) not for a false Religion,
but against all Religion. The Pretence is
against *Superstition*; and all the most essen-
tial Parts of the *Christian* Religion, under
that Colour are arraigned, and condemned
as *superstitious*. And so through the Sides
of our blessed Saviour, (thus crucified a-
VOL. II. I fresh)

SERM. *fresh*) the very Vitals of natural Religion
 III. are struck at, and downright *Atheism*, and
 universal *Scepticism* advanced; and which
 is the Monstrousness of the Attempt, the
 bigotted *Atheists* take indefatigable Pains,
 to make others, as much the *Children* of
the Devil, as themselves; and this in or-
 der (such is their impudent Mockery) to
 make them both better *Subjects*, and bet-
 ter *Christians*.

I PRODUCE these modern Instances to
 shew, that Bigottry, which makes People
 adhere with extreme Fondness to the Pre-
 judices they first suck'd in, and the Errors
 they have been all along nursed up in, is
 a perpetual Obstruction to the Propaga-
 tion of Truth; and very mischievous to
 the *Christian* Religion. But to proceed

Secondly, AND more briefly, the Love of
 this World, and an undue Regard to secu-
 lar Interest, was from the Beginning a main
 Hindrance to the Progress of *Christianity*,
 among both *Jews*, and *Gentiles*; and is, as
 to the Efficacy, and Power of it, among
 those that called themselves *Christians*.

THE *Scribes*, and *Pharisees* were the
 great Leaders amongst the *Jews*, and highly
 esteemed,

esteemed, both for their exact Knowledge S E R M.
in the Law, and the strict Observation of III.
it. And this gave them an entire Posses-
sion of the People's Hearts, and their Pur-
ses: And this yielded them a perpetual
Harvest. Their *Cups*, and *Platters*, tho'
clean'd without, with Abundance of Nicety,
were full of Extortion, as our Saviour told Mat. xxiii;
them. They lived upon the Spoil; nay, ^{25.}
and their pretended Sanctity was the Bait,
with which they caught their silly Prey.
For as they are taxed again in the same
Chapter, *They devour'd Widows Houses,* ^{14.}
and for a Pretence made long Prayers; e-
ven whilst they were swallowing the de-
licious Morsel. And when they were de-
tected in these vile Arts, and branded as
Hypocrites, as they deserved; they per-
ceived that the People's Veneration would
sink apace, and their Profit thence arising
cease of course; and being incensed at this,
they set themselves Might and Main to
oppose this new *Teacher*, whose heavenly
Doctrine, and holy Life, they found would
quite ruine their Reputation, which was
in Truth as ill-gotten, and held with as

SERM. had a Title, as was the Money that they
 III. squeez'd from their deluded Admirers.

AND no Doubt, the *Pagan Priests*, who
 lived upon the Cheat of *Oracles*, and the
Sacrifices that were offer'd in their *Temples*,
 and the *Gifts* that were brought thi-
 ther; they, I say, no Doubt, and all that
 had any Relation to them, thought them-
 selves nearly concern'd to oppose this new
 Way of *Worship*; that was likely to de-
 prive them of a comfortable Livelihood.
 This was it, we know, that made *Deme-
 trius the Silversmith*, and his *Craftsmen*,
 cry out in a Fit of religious Anger; *Great
 is Diana of the Ephesians: And shall her
 Temple be despised, and her Magnificence
 destroyed, whom all Asia, and the World
 worshippingeth?*

Acts xix
 27, 28.

Mark iv.
 29.

BESIDES, we are informed, in the Pa-
 rable of the Sower, that *the Cares of this
 World, and the Deceitfulness of Riches*, are
*apt to choak the Word, and render it un-
 fruitful*. It could not but seem a very
 hard Condition to those, who had set their
 Hearts upon worldly Wealth; to leave all
 and follow *Christ*. We have an Example
 of

Darkness rather than Light.

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of this in the young Man, who was o-^{SERM.}
therwise pretty well disposed, or had made ^{III.}
at least fair Professions; but as soon as he
heard this, he went away in Sorrow, and
Despondency. This hindred him from
embracing the *Gospel*, and has tempted o-
thers to apostatize from it, which occa-
sioned St. Paul to say, *That the Love of* ^{1 Tim. vi.}
Money was the Root of all Evil, which ^{10.}
whilst some have coveted after, they have er-
red from the Faith, and have pierced them-
selves through with many Sorrows.

AND questionless Riches are still as de-
ceitful as ever, and have the same be-
witching Power over Mens Affections.
Hence it is, that Men of corrupt Minds,
that are destitute of Truth, and blinded by
the God of this World, are so easily con-
firmed in any Error, if it be but gainful:
Hence is it, that some can prevail upon
themselves, even to dissemble the Truth a-
gainst their own Knowledge, and to *bandle*
the Word of God itself *deceitfully*, to make
it more palatable, and pleasing to their
Hearers, and thereby the more profitable
to themselves; as if Religion were no o-
ther indeed, than a Slight, and Craft to

SERM. live by. Hence is it, that others can
 III. bring their flexible Consciences to comply,
 or not comply, with any Thing *Pro* or
Con, as may best serve their temporal Ends;
 as if Gain, and Godliness were really convertible Terms, and necessarily related to each other.

THESE, and such Practices as these, are too visible in the World, to need the Illustration of particular Examples; and they are a manifest Prejudice to the sacred Truth, and incompatible with that Uncorruptness, Gravity, and Sincerity, which a Christian should always shew, both in his Life and Doctrine.

Thirdly, PRIDE, and vain Glory have always been, and still are a very dangerous Temptation to make Men resist the Truth, and rebel against the bright shining Light of the *Gospel* itself.

AND this was the very Case again, of the *Scribes*, and *Pharisees*; they had all along pass'd for the ablest Expositors of the Law, and were as eminent for their seeming Piety, as they were for their traditional Learning; and for this they receiv'd Honour one of another, and had the Admiration

ration, and Applause of all the People. SERM.

And therefore when our *Saviour* accused III.

them openly, as the malicious Perverters,

as well as the notorious Transgressors of

the Law, and rescued its true Force, and

Meaning from their false Glosses, and cor-

rupt Traditions; this was doubtless a Pro-

vocation to them, to gainsay, and discoun-

tenance the Doctrine that he advanced;

and accordingly we find that they made

Use of their Authority while it lasted, to

brow-beat the People, and keep them in

Awe by the Dint of their own Example.

Have any of the Rulers say they, or the John vii.
Pharisees believed on him? 48.

AND when many of the chief Rulers them-
selves, were induced to believe on him, how-
ever because of the Pharisees they confessed
him not, (we read *John xii. 42.*) lest they
should be put out of the Synagogue; the Re-
proach of which they could not bear; For 43.
they loved the Praise of Men, more than the
Praise of God.

AND it was much the same Impediment,
that held back so many of the learned *Hea-*
then from taking up the Profession of
Christianity. For the *Philosophers* were

SERM. most of them vain-glorious Persons, who
 III. took Pride in Fetches, and Subtleties, and
 boasted of a greater Depth of Knowledge
 than other Men; and therefore 'tis no
 Wonder, if they had no Relish for a plain
 simple Doctrine, that had nothing of Shew,
 or Ostentation in it; 'tis no Wonder, if
 they thought it Scorn, to be taught any
 Thing new, by a Parcel of *Idiots*. For
 that's the best Appellation that they would
 have vouchsafed the *Apostles of Christ*, in
 Comparison of themselves.

AND this arrogant Conceit, and vain Affectation of Knowledge, is still a reigning Evil, and a pestilent Enemy to *Christianity*.

FOR when once a Man entertains high Thoughts of his own Abilities, and Improvements; he must, he thinks, in Justice to himself, distinguish himself for a superior *Genius*, and a Man of Notions above the Vulgar: And in order to this, what shall come into his Head sooner, or indeed what can he do easier than to set up for a *sceptical* Disputer about Religion? This therefore is that he chuses likely, for the Exercise of his Parts. His Sagacity is too great, to be imposed upon by the
 Cant

Darkness rather than Light.

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Cant of *Priests*, his Reason is too much exalted to condescend to be the Handmaid of Faith; and his Faith is too squeamish to believe Things that are unintelligible. He is so used to Demonstrations, if you'll credit him, that he cannot rely upon Testimony, though it be such as is divine: He is so fond of Paradoxes, that he cannot take up with Mysteries; and so dexterous at a Caviel, that he knows not how to acquiesce in the most positive Proof, or solid Reason. It is his Business, and Study rather to find Flaws in Religion, to start Doubts, and Scruples; to be ready at every Turn, with his notable Queries concerning the Author of this, or that Book in Scripture, or Chronological Difficulties, or various Readings; or Passages that carry the Appearance of Contradiction: And with these he pleases himself, and triumphs as much, as if he was able to prove, that there was never any such Man as *Jesus Christ*, and that the *Gospel* History is all but a Bundle of *legendary* Tales.

WHICH latter, if he would but professedly attempt, he would affect Singularity to some Purpose; because that is somewhat

SERM.

III.

SERM. what more, than any of the antient Enemies of *Christianity* ever pretended to.

III. But such an Attempt, though it would be something more ridiculously singular, yet it would not be much more unreasonable, than to insist upon such frivolous cavilling Objections, as if they were of Weight sufficient to bear down all the *Historical* Evidence, and moral Certainty of the *Gospel*; confirmed as it is, by the infallible Testimony of God himself.

IN the mean Time, this Itch of Vanity and Affectation is plainly a Distemper of the Mind, that is apt to render it very adverse to the Belief of *Evangelical* Truth; and the Captivation of the Understanding, to the Obedience of Faith.

Fourthly, AN Indulgence to the Lusts of the Flesh, and a Licentiousness of Manners have been of Old, and always will be a grand Impediment to the Belief of the *Gospel*; and a strong Temptation to *Infidelity*.

FOR certain, this among others, was one Cause of the Backwardness of the *Scribes*, and *Pharisees* to embrace the Faith of *Christ*. For they were such loose Interpreters of the Law, that if the bare Letter were

Darkness rather than Light. 123

were observed, they had little Regard to SERM.
the chief Intention of it: And we find by III.
our *Saviour's* Correction of their lewd Glo-

ses in the 5th of *St. Matthew*, that with all
their pretended Strictness, they had left
themselves Liberty enough, to indulge
most of their irregular Lusts, and Passions.
Nay the Truth is, they placed the Stress
of Religion so entirely in the legal Purifi-
cations, and such like outward Ordinances,
that they hardly had any other Notion of
any Impurities or Defilements, but what
the Ceremonial Law had made so; insensi-
ble the mean while (as it should seem by
the Application of our *Saviour's* Discourse

to them:) *That out of the Heart proceed e-* Mat. xx.
vil Thoughts, Murders, Adulteries, Fornica- 19.

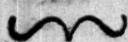
tions, Thefts, false Witness, Blasphemies.

That all these Things come from within,
and that these *defile the Man*. This, I say,

they seem to have been in a great Measure
insensible of, and therefore when they
heard our *Saviour* preaching up Sincerity
of Heart, and Purity, and the Mortifica-
tion of all inordinate Lusts, and voluntary
Self-Denial, these were Austerities that
they saw no Necessity for, and could not

approve

SERM. approve of for Fear of condemning themselves.



No! doubtless, they rather took Offence at his Person, and Doctrine, who *himself fulfilled all Righteousness*, and required a Degree of it from the meanest of his Followers, much exceeding the boasted Perfection of the *Scribes*, and *Pharisees*. Nay, expected from the *Scribes*, and *Pharisees* themselves, if they had a Mind to be his *Disciples*, that they should become much more righteous, than they had any Inclination to be.

AND it was much the same Reason in all Probability, that among other Things, obstructed the Conversion of the *Heathens*. For the *Christian Religion* was too holy, and pure, for a People whose very Worship was defiled with Impurities, suitable to the Character, and Example of the false Deities they worshipped; and whose *Philosophy* was not refined enough to make their Morals much purer than their Worship. Hence is it, as I have observed in a former Discourse; that among all the *Heathen Lawgivers*, and *Philosophers* there is no such Thing as a compleat System of
Morality

Morality to be found; none but what has SERM.
its considerable Flaws, and Blemishes, III.
none indeed but what made too large Allowances to the Indulgence of those fleshly Lusts, that most stand in Need of a Restraint: because they were hardest to be restrained. And when Men were so educated, and so addicted; no Doubt, the Severity, and Sanctity of the *Christian* Morals, was a Prejudice not easy to be removed. With them, it was enough to bear down all the Evidence, and Authority of *Christ's* Doctrine, only to say in Contempt; how comes this Man to be more wise, or more righteous than *Solon*, or *Lycurgus*, *Plato*, or *Cicero*?

AND this I reckon is the great Stumbling-Block to our modern Infidels; they cannot go on in their licentious Practices, without breaking loose from all Principles; they therefore turn Revolters from the *Christian* Faith, that they may the more effectually shake off the Yoke of Obedience, and because natural Religion will haunt such *Renegades* in the Tents of *Deism*; they are often driven to the last desperate Refuge, and forlorn Hope of *Atheism*.

No

SERM. No Wonder then, that the Gospel surrounded as it is with Light, should be still
 III. hid to those that are stark blind with Bigottry, Obstinacy, Pride, Avarice, or Sensuality.

LET every Man therefore, that finds in himself any the least Propensity to doubting, concerning the Truth of his Religion; let him before he sets up for a Disputer, or *Dogmatizer* on the Side of Irreligion, narrowly search his own Heart, lest his Doubts should arise from some Corruption lurking at the Bottom of it.

PERHAPS he may have observed, that the Principles of Religion are early instilled into Youth by Education, and hence take up an hasty Prejudice, that it is merely *traditional*, without any rational Evidence to support it; and then rashly resolve to attack it at all Adventures, without once examining the strength of its Foundation. And not improbably this Prepossession against Religion, may itself be strengthened by an Obstinacy of Temper, and a perverse Pride of Heart, in bearing out with a select few, in Opposition to the Belief, and common Sense of Mankind. Or if the
 mere

mere Affectation of Applause, or the Ambition of being at the Head of a Party, S E R M. III. be not the prevailing Motive; the inordinate Love of the World most probably may; the Lust of Power, Wealth, and Honour, for which Men of corrupt Minds will sell the Truth, and not buy it, tho' they part with Faith, and a good Conscience into the Bargain.

OR *Lastly*, if the Lusts of the Flesh be predominant, they will be ready to drive him upon the same Precipice. This licentious Liver wants a retiring Place from Conscience, and therefore he commences Libertine in Principle; he turns *Infidel blindfold*, that he may run the wild Career of Pleasure undisturb'd, and see no Danger.

IF any one therefore finds himself under Temptation to Unbelief, or feels any Staggerings of Mind that Way, let him search, and probe his Heart to the very Core; lest this evil Disease should be growing apace out of some one, or other of these Depravities of Nature.

FOR let him be assured, that this is most commonly the Case, and it is withal the highest

128 *The Reason why Men love, &c.*

SERM. highest Aggravation of the Crime, when
III. any evil Habit, any Impiety, or Immorality proves the Tempter, and Seducer to Infidelity. For this is the Condemnation (that is, the most aggravating Cause of it) that Light is come into the World, and Men loved Darknefs rather than Light, because their Deeds were Evil. The farther Consideration of which, I leave for the next Opportunity.

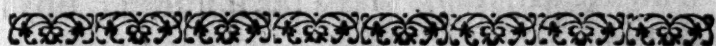


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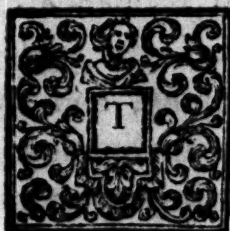
S E R M O N IV.

The Reason why Men love Dark-
ness rather than Light.



JOHN iii. 19.

*And this is the Condemnation, that
Light is come into the World, and
Men loved Darkness rather than
Light, because their Deeds were
Evil.*



THE three Points that offer S E R M.
themselves to our Consi- IV.
deration in the Text, are; ~

I. *First*, WHAT that
Light should be, which is here said to be
VOL. II. K come

SERM. *come into the World:* And that I under-

IV. stand to be the *Gospel of Jesus Christ*, which is by St. Paul expressly called, *The Light of the glorious Gospel of Christ*; and fully answers that Character, both as it discovers to us some of the noblest, and most important Truths in Religion; and those either altogether unknown, or but imperfectly known before; and also as 'tis proposed to Men's Belief, with the highest and brightest Degree of Evidence: Both which Particulars have been insisted upon at large.

II. THE *Second Point* is, how it should come to pass, that Men should reject this *Light*, and wilfully shut their Eyes against it. And of this the Text assigns a plain Reason; *they loved Darkneſs rather than Light, because their Deeds were Evil*. And as it is in Mens Power, if they will be so perverse, to resist the clearest Evidence of Truth, and rebel against the Light itself; so there were from the Beginning, and always will be, many vicious Inclinations, and Practices in Men, that will keep them back from heartily embracing the *Gospel*;
and

Darkness rather than Light.

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and receiving the Love of the Truth that SER M.
they might be saved. Such as are in par- IV.
ticular, those stiff Prejudices, that are apt
to arise from the blind Bigottry, and Zeal,
that Men commonly have for the Way
that they have been train'd up in: The
immoderate Love of this World, and an
undue Regard of temporal Interest; Pride,
and Self-conceit, and a vain Affectation of
Knowledge more than vulgar: An Indul-
gence to the Lusts of the Flesh, and Li-
centiousness of Manners, and the like. For
these, and such as these, were the grand
Impediments to the Reception, and Pro-
gress of the *Gospel* at first, both among
Jews and *Gentiles*. They could not bring
themselves to comply with a Religion, that
was so directly contrary to their inveterate
Prejudices, and predominant Passions; they
could not endure to behold the *Light*, that
exposed their own Deformities to open
View; no! *they loved Darkness rather than
Light, because their Deeds were Evil*; for
which, *Darkness* they hoped might be a
convenient Cover, but *Light* they knew
would bring Discovery, and Shame along
with it.

SERM THIS is the true Account, as I endeavour'd to prove in my last Discourse, of
 IV. the Infidelity, and Impenitence of the *Jews*, and others, that were antiently Enemies to *Christianity*; and the same is the Case ('tis to be fear'd) of those, that are no Friends to it still. It is not that the Evidence for the *Gospel* is too weak, or the Motives to Faith, and Repentance of themselves insufficient; but 'tis because their Lusts are too strong to yield, and their Vices too dear to be parted with.

AND this renders their Principles invincible, and incurable: It makes their Hearts gross, and closes their Eyes, that they cannot (nor would they if they could) see, or understand; *lest they should be converted, and healed.* A sad, and very deplorable Estate, that they wilfully reduce themselves to. And

III. WHICH is the *Third* Particular in my Text, that remains now to be considered, *viz.* how just, and heavy, and inevitable the Condemnation of such Men will be. *This* (saith he, who shall finally be their Judge) *is the Condemnation, that*
Light

Darkness rather than Light.

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Light is come into the World, and Men loved Darkness rather than Light, because their Deeds were Evil. And it will appear, SERM. IV.

First, THAT they who love Darkness rather than *Light*; that is, chuse to continue in Unbelief, and Impenitence, even when they have the best Means of Information, and the strongest Motives to the contrary; it will appear, I say, that all such do incur a *just Condemnation*; because they are guilty of a very plain Neglect of a known Duty. For it is a Duty universally acknowledged by all that own a God, that he is in all things to be believed, and obeyed; that his Will, so far forth as it is reveal'd, ought to be a Rule to Mens Actions, and a Law to their Lives, and that if there be any such Revelation of his Will extant, (as 'tis to be presumed there is) that they who are made acquainted with it, are carefully to consult it, that so they may the better govern themselves by it.

Now these Principles being once admitted; it naturally follows, that there is, and must be a strict Obligation upon all those, to whom the *Gospel* has been, is, or may

SERM. be preach'd, to consider it with all the At-
 IV. tention, Care, and Impartiality that is pos-
 sible.

FOR the *Gospel* contains Matters right
 worthy of God to be reveal'd, and worthy
 of Men to be receiv'd; such as are those
 noble, and happy Discoveries it makes
 concerning God's Nature, and Worship,
 and his inestimable Love in the Redemp-
 tion of the World; and concerning the
 whole Duty of Man, and the Means of
 performing it; and the Terms of our Sal-
 vation, and the Motives to lay hold of it,
 and make it sure.

AND besides these Matters so truly ex-
 cellent, and divine in themselves; the *Go-
 spel* is propounded to Men's Belief, with
 the clearest, and fullest Degree of Evi-
 dence, that the Nature of the Thing would
 bear. It has all the moral Certainty that
 any *History* can have, more than most o-
 ther *Histories* have; as being deliver'd to
 us by Men sufficiently knowing, and most
 unquestionably faithful; for they seal'd to
 the Truth of what they related, by their
 Hearts dearest Blood. And besides, the
 Facts which they relate, are many of them
 such,

Darkness rather than Light.

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such, and so circumstantiated, (as the *Re-* SERM.
surrection of our *Saviour* particularly) that IV.
if false, they could not have been con-
ceal'd, they must of Necessity have been
discovered: And since no such Discovery
was made, 'tis next to impossible they
should be otherwise than true.

MOREOVER, this *History* is back'd by
the concurrent Testimony of other *Histo-*
ries, and not contradicted by its most pro-
fess'd Adversaries.

AND it is still more remarkably con-
firmed, by the exact Correspondence that
it bears to the *Old Testament*; which the
Jews believe to be a *Revelation* from God,
and which is indeed indubitably such.

AND *Lastly*, to crown all, it has the di-
rect Approbation, and Attestation of Hea-
ven, by Signs, and Wonders, and diverse
Miracles, and Gifts of the *Holy Ghost*:
Which *Jesus* himself appeal'd to, as the
Credentials of his heavenly Commission;
and authorized his *Apostles* in like Manner,
to go, and teach all Nations; when once
they should be endued, as most miracu-
lously they were, at the Day of *Pentecost*,
with Power from on high,

SERM. So that the *Gospel* has all the *Historical*

IV. Evidence that any *History* hath, or can have: Nay, all the most indisputable Marks of a divine *Revelation*, that it is either needful, or fit for any *Revelation* to have, which is what I formerly proved at large.

THE Use I would make of it at present is; that being in all Appearance, so authentically attested as it is; this infers a direct Obligation upon all those, to whom it may have been proposed, to bestow the most diligent, and impartial Consideration upon it.

FOR if it be, as it appears to be, a true *Revelation* of God's Mind, and Will to Mankind, it ought to be heartily embraced, and readily obeyed as such.

AND where it has been once fairly proposed, it plainly obliges to this Belief, and Obedience; and 'tis certain, the Plea of Ignorance can never dissolve that Obligation.

FOR if it be our indispensable Duty, to obey God's Will when we know it; it is without all Peradventure equally our Duty, to attain to that Knowledge by any Means we can; and more especially to
hearken

Darkness rather than Light.

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hearken most attentively to his Voice, SERM.
IV.
when he vouchsafes to speak unto us by his Son, who left the Bosom of his Father, on Purpose to declare him to the World.

And in him *the Grace of God* (as the Apostle expresses it, 2 *Tit. ii.*) *That bringeth Salvation to all Men, hath appear'd, teaching us, that denying Ungodliness, and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World; looking for that blessed Hope, and the glorious Appearing of the great God, and our Lord Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar People zealous of good Works.*

THIS is the short Sum of Christianity, and it is a Lesson very plainly taught, and very easily learn'd, if People be but free from Byass; and willing to be instructed. But yet, Men if they will remain ignorant, may be ignorant notwithstanding. But such their Ignorance does not imply their Innocence, but quite the contrary; because it proceeds from (at least) a heedless Neglect of the obvious, and easy Means of Instruction. And that Neglect, (if there be nothing

SERM. nothing else in it) is manifestly a Breach
 IV. of Duty, of that dutiful Deference, and
 Submission which is always owing to God,
 and whatsoever has the Stamp of his Au-
 thority.

AND this undutiful piece of Negligence,
 is itself a Crime, even when it stands sing-
 ly; that justly deserves the Censure of the
 Text. It is alone a sufficient Cause of
 Condemnation, that Men should supinely
 sit down in Ignorance, and prefer *Dark-
 ness* to *Light*, when it is held out to them,
 and they might, for opening their Eyes,
 both discern the Beauty, and enjoy the Be-
 nefit of it. But then

Secondly, THIS unreasonable Preference
 of *Darkness* to *Light*, is not always the
 mere Effect of this supine Kind of Igno-
 rance. It often takes its Rise from a Con-
 currence of more malignant Causes, and is
 attended with higher Aggravations; and in
 Proportion to the Degree of the Guilt, it
 is liable to so much the heavier Condem-
 nation.

THIS Difference is sufficiently discerni-
 ble in the *Jews*, to whom the Word of
 God was first spoken; and of whom my
 Text

Darkness rather than Light.

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Text is primarily to be understood. They SERM.
put the Word away from them, and judg- IV.
ed themselves unworthy of everlasting Life; As xiii.
as St. Paul told some of them to their Fa- 46.

ces. That is, by the Verdict of their own Actions, they stood in Effect self-condemned, for rejecting the Gospel; when it was proposed to them with such convincing Evidence. And in this Condemnation they were all involv'd, both the People, and their Rulers; but not all with an equal Share of Guilt. The Ignorance of the People, and their Incredulity occasioned by it, was the less culpable; because they were less capable, 'tis likely, of judging and comparing Things together, of examining into the Credentials of our Saviour's Commission; and distinguishing a true Prophet from an Impostor. And it was so much more difficult for them to discern the Truth, thro' so thick a Mist of Ignorance, because they had been bred up in profound Admiration of the Scribes and Pharisees; whose every Word, passed for Oracles with them.

BUT then these blind Leaders of the Blind, have Abundance more to answer for;

SERM. for; they laboured also under great Ignorance (notwithstanding their high Pretensions to Knowledge) and very strong Prepossessions. But this their Ignorance appears to have been in a great Measure voluntary, and affected; and their Prepossessions were owing not to the Force of Custom, and Education alone, but to the more prevailing Power of their unmortify'd Lusts. They were notoriously covetous, proud, vain-glorious, sensual, and hypocritical (as has been formerly charged, and proved upon them) and therefore *the Wisdom that was from above*, was rejected, and derided by them, although it brought its divine Attestation along with it; even because it was *pure and peaceable, gentle and easy to be intreated: full of Mercy, and good Fruits, without Partiality, and without Hypocrisy*. This was a Religion too *pure and undefiled*, and too strait laced by a great Deal, for those that were addicted to so many enormous Vices.

THEY had the Opportunity indeed of seeing the Miracles of *Christ* performed, and hearing the Doctrine which he taught, and they were perfectly astonish'd at the one,

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one, and at all Turns silenced by the o-SERM.
ther; which is a plain Indication that VI.
there was no want of Evidence to con-
vince them, that he did both act, and
speak with an Authority, that they were
not able with any good Reason, to op-
pose, or contradict.

BUT then they saw by the same *Light*,
that the Principles which he advanced,
were irreconcilable with the Practices, in
when they allow'd themselves: And there-
fore with them, the whole Question at last
turned upon this: Shall we part with our
beloved Sins, and submit to the Evidence
of Truth, and be induced to Repentance,
and be converted? Or shall we still retain
our Sins, and remain in the Darkness of
Infidelity, in Spight of Evidence, lest co-
ming to the Light our Deeds should be re-
proved? And this in all Probability was
what made the *Light* so hateful to them,
and tempted them to reject the *Gospel*, a-
gainst the Sense, and Conviction of their
own Minds. I say, against the Sense, and
Conviction of their own Minds; for even
so they scrupled not to reject, or which is
all one, to make void the *Law* itself,
(which

SERM. (which they professed to hold in the high-

IV. est Veneration) whenever it thwarted any
 of their vicious Inclinations. Thus for Instance, did they shamefully distinguish away, one of the most acknowledged Duties in natural, as well as instituted Religion; viz. the Honour, and Maintenance due to their aged Parents, under Pretence of an unnatural Vow, that Tradition it seems had made binding to the contrary.

Now 'tis no Wonder, that those Men who could offer Violence to the Construction, and Obligation of the Law, in a Matter that Nature, and common Reason, and Instinct might have taught them; should also reject the *Gospel* in Despight of the very highest, and brightest Degree of Evidence. 'Tis rather plain, I think, that they that could be guilty of such a staring Absurdity, might do any Thing, though never so absurd; nay, though never so much against their own Judgment, and Conscience.

AND such Men's Infidelity, and Disobedience is certainly attended with the most aggravating Circumstances; and therefore deserves the heavier Sentence. For it apparently

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parently arises, not from any want of Evidence, or Attention, from Weakness of Understanding, or any other pitiable Infir-
mity; but from a prodigious Perverseness, and Depravity of the Will, and a total Alienation of the Mind from Truth, and Goodness; and from the true Religion in particular, because it requires Holiness of Life, and Conversation. SERM. IV.

AND when this is the true Reason of Men's Enmity to the Faith of *Christ*, 'tis so certain that Ignorance cannot pass for their Excuse, that even their Knowledge will sorely increase their Condemnation. The Truth on't is, such Men know more of Religion, than they are willing to digest, and put in Practice; and they take Shelter in a pretended want of Evidence, or an affected Ignorance, that they may seem with the better Grace to reject, what secretly in their Hearts they dislike. But the Contention chiefly lies, not between the Reason that may be alledged for Religion, but between God's *holy Laws*, and their own ungodly Lusts; the one, or the other of which, they see a plain Necessity of Renouncing; but having been so long subject
to

SERM. to the Empire of their Lusts, it is the
 IV. greatest Odds imaginable, but Reason shall
 be thought too weak an Advocate, and Revelation itself not a competent Judge to decide the Cause in behalf of Religion.

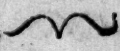
Now this is certainly the most malicious and provoking Opposition to God, and his Authority that can be. It is no less than to give Credit to the wicked Suggestions of *Satan*, and our own wicked Hearts, rather than to his sacred Truth reveal'd in *Scripture*, and sealed with the *Signet* of his *right Hand*. It is to prefer our Follies, and Vanities, and Sins, to all his gracious Promises, and all the Overtures of Mercy, and Favour tender'd to us in the *Gospel*. It is to set him, and his Power, and Vengeance, at open Defiance; and regardless of his Threatnings, to persist in our Rebellion, and Impenitence.

AND doubtless, such a disingenuous, and daring Provocation as this, must be much more culpable, and damnable, than even the *Heathenish Infidelity*; for they shall be answerable only, for transgressing Nature's Law, which they have in common with other Men, but not for rejecting the *Light* of

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of the Gospel; which was never imparted S E R M.
to them. And therefore their Punishment IV.

shall be but light in Comparison of what 
they shall suffer, who have presumptuously
rebelled against both; as may fairly be
collected from our Saviour's Denunciation
in a parallel Case. *Woe unto thee Chorazin,* Mat. xi.
Woe unto thee Bethsaida, for if the mighty ^{21.}
Works that have been done in you, had been
done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have re-
pent long ago in Sackcloth and Ashes.

BUT I say it shall be more tolerable for
Tyre, and Sidon at the Day of Judgment,
than for you.

A HEAVY Doom for all those that are
concerned in it; and that which makes
the Terror of it so much the greater, is
what I shall now shew in the third Place:
Namely,

III. Thirdly, THAT this their Condemna-
tion is certain, and inevitable: It is abso-
lutely unavoidable, if they continue obsti-
nate in their Infidelity, and Impenitence;
and it is extremely hazardous, whether
they will ever be induced to believe, and
repent or no.

VOL. II.

L

First,

SERM. *First*, I say, their Condition is absolutely
 IV. unavoidable, if they continue obstinate in
 ~~~~~ their Infidelity, and Impenitence.

FOR whilst so they do, they preclude themselves from the very Possibility of Salvation. For as sure as the *Gospel* is true, there is not Salvation in any other; *There is none other Name under Heaven, given among Men, whereby we must be saved, but that of the blessed Jesus; who is the only Way, and the Truth, and the Life.* His Blood is the only effectual Propitiation for Sin: His Precepts are the Rule, and his Example the Pattern of Holiness, and Perfection.

AND there are no other Terms of Pardon, or Reconciliation, of escaping Misery, or arriving at Happiness, but that *Repentance from dead Works*, and that *Newness of Life*, which his *Gospel* requires.

AND therefore those who knowingly, and wilfully, nay maliciously, and presumptuously, reject the *Gospel* Terms, which alone are available to Salvation; do, while they continue in that State of Mind, render their Salvation impossible, and their Damnation unavoidable.

FOR

FOR if those that have sinned without the SERM.  
Law, shall perish without the Law; and if IV.  
the Word spoken by Angels was stedfast; and Heb. ii. 2,  
every Transgression, and Disobedience re- &c.  
ceiv'd a just Recompence of Reward; how  
shall we escape, if we neglect so great Sal-  
vation? Which at the first began to be spo-  
ken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us  
by them that heard him; God also bearing  
them Witness; both with Signs, and Won-  
ders, and diverse Miracles, and Gifts of the  
Holy Ghost, according to his own Will.  
How shall we, how can we escape indeed?  
Since the contemptuous Rejection of such  
unparallel'd Grace, and all the powerful  
Evidence with which it comes recom-  
mended to us; as it is the highest Provo-  
cation to God, so it carries its own dread-  
ful Punishment along with it, in depri-  
ving us of the only possible Means of Sal-  
vation.

AND as it is impossible for those that  
remain obstinately incredulous, and impeni-  
tent to be saved, whilst they are so: So

Secondly, THEIR Conversion, and Re-  
pentance is highly improbable, and ex-  
tremely hazardous at best. For their Pre-



SERM. judices, and Lusts seem to be Proof against

IV. all reasonable Conviction; at least they have  
hitherto made a notable Resistance to the  
clearest Evidence, and strongest Motives  
that can well be, or indeed ought to be  
offered in such a Case. For what clearer  
Evidence can be desir'd, than that which  
resolves itself into the highest moral Cer-  
tainty, that any *History* can pretend to,  
confirmed by the most indubitable Marks  
of a Testimony truly divine, that any Re-  
velation can produce? And what stronger  
Motives can be expected, than the Propo-  
sal of everlasting Happiness, and everlast-  
ing Misery; the one as the Reward of our  
Belief, and Obedience, the other as the  
Punishment of the contrary? This is the  
Evidence, and these the Motives proper to  
the *Gospel*.

AND if it were to be supposed, that any  
Revelation could come better attested, or  
enforced than this; it must be a Way too  
forcible I doubt, to consist with that Free-  
dom of Choice; which alone can recom-  
mend the virtuous Ingenuity of our Faith,  
and Obedience.

Now

Now such a Method as this, that would SERM.  
make Converts of us by mere Constraint, IV.  
were by no Means a proper Method for  
the Trial of rational Creatures, as God has  
made us, and therefore may be presumed  
to treat us.

AND again, were it a Method in any  
Case practicable, or fit for God to use;  
yet it can hardly be imagined, that he  
would see fit to use it in this Case of all  
others; *i. e.* that he should constrain those  
against the Bent of their Inclinations to turn  
Believers, and Penitents, who had first  
constrain'd him (if I may so say) to betake  
himself to this last Resort of his Power,  
by their obstinate Opposition to those or-  
dinary Means, and Motives, which might  
have been as effectual, if Men had been  
ingenuous, and persuasible.

THE Use therefore of such very extraor-  
dinary Means (if there be Room for any  
such) can never be thought to be reserved  
(by Way of Privilege) for such vile *Mis-*  
*creants* as these.

So far from it, that the contrary is justly  
to be fear'd. For besides the natural Ten-  
dency that a Perverseness of Temper, and

SERM. vicious Disposition of Mind, has to debauch  
IV. the Understanding, and extinguish the Sense  
of Good, and Evil, and blot out the Evidences of Truth, and Falshood, when 'tis against the Interests of their Lusts to distinguish aright of either of them. I say, besides all this, it is a just Judgment that God threatens, and inflicts in such a Case, to withdraw his illuminating Grace, and leave People under the Possession of their inveterate Prejudices, and that Infatuation of their impetuous Lusts; the Consequence of which is, that even *seeing they cannot see, and hearing they cannot hear*; they become as incapable of Conviction, as once they were averse to it. And a judicial Blindness, and Hardness of Heart, is the present Punishment of their former affected Infidelity, and obstinate Impenitence; and the certain Forerunner of eternal Damnation.

AND thus I have endeavoured to evince;  
*First*, That the preferring Darkness to Light, or the Disbelief of the *Gospel* (take it in its lowest, and most extenuating Circumstances) when it proceeds chiefly from a supine Neglect of the obvious, and easy  
Means



Means of Information; is a Breach of the SERM.  
Duty, and Deference which is always due IV.  
to God, and his Authority; and on that  
very Account incurs just Condemnation.  
And then *Secondly*, That this Condemnation  
will be so much the sorer, and heavier,  
according as it is loaded with greater,  
and more heinous Aggravations; as when  
Men's Unbelief, and Disobedience to the  
*Gospel* arises, not from Want of Attention,  
or Weakness of Understanding, or any pi-  
tiable Infirmary; but from a prodigious  
Depravity of their Wills, and an excessive  
Fondness for their Lusts, and a malicious  
Hatred to the Truth, for no other Rea-  
son, but because it will not sooth them in  
their Sins. And *Thirdly*, To make Peo-  
ple sensible of the extreme Danger of the  
Sin of Infidelity, especially when attended  
with so much Malignity; I have shewn,  
that it renders their Condemnation abso-  
lutely unavoidable, if they persist in it;  
because it deprives them of the only possi-  
ble Means of Salvation, and at the same  
Time, that it renders their Conversion too,  
very improbable, and more than ordina-  
rily hazardous; both because of the fatal

SERM. Tendency that Vice has to darken Men's

IV. Understandings, and to corrupt their very Consciences; and also because of the Provocation that is given to the divine Justice to turn their voluntary Sin, into their necessary Punishment; and thereby conclude them finally, under an Incapacity of Conversion, Repentance, or Pardon.

THIS is the short Sum of what has been said upon this Argument; and now I shall put an End to this whole Discourse, by a serious Application by Way of Expostulation, and Caution to those, who live under the *Gospel Meridian*, and in a *Christian Country*, and yet are no hearty *Profelytes to Christianity*, at least *sceptical Disputers* against it.

AND of these I demand in the first Place, that they would produce their Cause, and bring forth the strong Reasons that they have in Reserve, against the *Christian Religion*; that we may see whether they are indeed strong enough, to baffle all the positive, and powerfvl Evidence, that is alledged for it.

WHAT have they then that is solid and substantial to offer? Any Thing that will

will overthrow the Credit of the *Gospel* History? Any Thing that will convict the Miracles of *Christ*, and his *Apostles* of Imposition? Or if they must be admitted for true Miracles, have they any Thing to prove, that they are no infallible Signs of God's Attestation, and Approbation? No! they are able to make but very feeble Efforts of this Kind, if any at all; the very Confession of *Jews*, and *Heathens*, our honest Adversaries of Old, would shame them out of that. Their Resort therefore is to small Doubts, Cavils, and Exceptions, of which they make mighty Difficulties. Not such Difficulties neither, but what may be fairly accounted for. And yet if they were much greater than they are, the general Proof of the *Christian* Religion stands unanswer'd, and unanswerable: And therefore particular Difficulties cannot be thought to affect the main Cause, nor ought they to stagger any reasonable Man's Belief.

Yes, it may be they will say; the Proof might be tolerably good at first, and sufficiently convincing to those that were so happy to be Ear, and Eye-witnesses to the Doctrine, and Miracles of *Christ*, and his Apostles



SERM. Apostles; but with us the Case is different;

IV.  rent; and how different I pray? They had the Evidence of Sense indeed, which we have not; but we also have some Degrees of Evidence which they could not have. We have undoubted Records of *History*, which make a faithful Report to us, of those Miracles which they saw, nay of many more Miracles than any one Man for his own Share could have the Opportunity of seeing; nay we have seen, or heard of the Accomplishment of some remarkable Predictions, which they lived not to see, or hear of.

AND in this Respect our *historical* Evidence is fuller, though not so immediate as that which they had from their Senses.

AND after all; Sense is no more an infallible Means of Information, than authentic *History*: It was as possible (if we must needs go to the utmost Stretch of Things) for them that lived in our *Saviour's*, and his *Apostle's* Days, to be deceiv'd by some *magical Illusion* in what they took to be the great Objects of our Senses, as it is for us at this Distance of Time,

Time, to be imposed upon by a false *Hi-* SERM.  
*story* that comes recommended to us, with IV.  
all the highest Circumstances of Credibility. ~~~~~

THE Short on't is, the Certainty, both of *their* Information from Sense, and *ours* from *History*, must rest at last upon God's Veracity, and Goodness. And his Veracity, and Goodness are in both Cases, alike concern'd not to suffer an Imposture to pass upon Mankind, in a Matter of such vast Importance.

IN this Respect therefore, both we, and they are fairly upon the Level. For we are equally secured against Deception, if we make a right Use of such Means as we have, and are willing to acquiesce in such Motives of Assent, as are sufficient to determine any rational Man.

AND for those that are so nice, and scrupulous in believing, that they cannot depend upon the Faith of *sacred History*, though never so authentically attested; they must give us leave to doubt in our Turns (absurd as it may seem) whether they would credit their own Eyes, and Ears, even if a new Scene of *Miracles* should be presented before them, and a  
Messenger

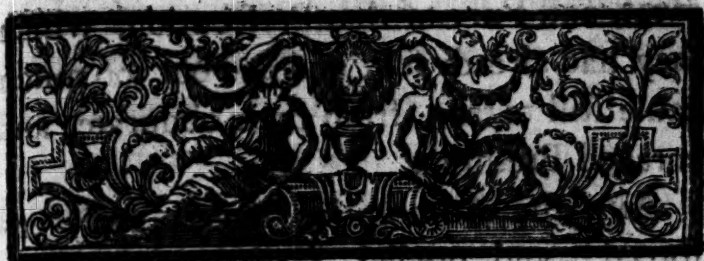
SERM. Messenger from Heaven should come to

IV. instruct. It would be a Gratification I confess, very unreasonable for them to expect, or God to grant; but supposing such a Thing, if they had a Mind to indulge themselves in endless Suspicions, against all Sense and Reason; they might, and in all Probability, if it were for the Interest of their darling Lusts, so they would.

For this is the grand Secret of Infidelity at last, and herein lies the *capital* Strength of the Cause, that when Mens Lusts are at Enmity with Religion, their Reason is easily bribed over to be on that Side, and in such a Case, the weakest of Arguments back'd with strong Inclinations, will be stout enough not to surrender to the utmost Force of Conviction. Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be ascribed as is due, all Praise, Glory, Might, Majesty, and Dominion, now, henceforth, and for evermore. *Amen.*

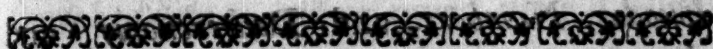
SERMON





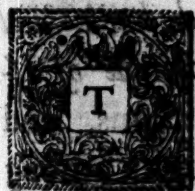
# S E R M O N V.

A Discourse against Infidelity.



H E B. iii. 12.

*Take heed, Brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil Heart of Unbelief, in departing from the living God.*



HIS Admonition is directed S E R M. V.  
by the *Apostle* to the converted *Jews*, who as yet possibly were but weak, and wavering in the Faith, or might be in Danger of

SERM. of fainting, and falling from it under the  
 V. Heat, and Fury of that Persecution, which  
 they had already felt, and had but too much  
 cause still to fear, from their obdurate, and  
 enraged Brethren.

AND the Admonition is very aptly enforced, and pressed Home upon them, from the unhappy Example of their Forefathers, who had been a *stubborn, and rebellious Generation*, even from the Time of *Moses*. The particular Instances of whose repeated Backslidings, and Provocations, are occasionally inserted in the Books of *Exodus*, *Numbers*, and *Deuteronomy*, and they are summarily recounted, and laid together in one View, in the 78<sup>th</sup>, and 106<sup>th</sup> *Psalms*. Where their deserved Character appears to be, *That their Spirit was not stedfast with God, that they forgot his Works, and his Wonders, that he had shewed them, that they believed not in God, and trusted not in his Salvation; that they provoked him, and grieved him; yea, turned back, and tempted him, and limited the holy one of Israel*. In short, after all the Signs, and Miracles that had been wrought among them, (which were so many astonishing  
 Proofs

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Proofs of God's over-ruling Power, and S E R M.  
(special Providence) they still wanted an V.  
Heart to perceive, and Eyes to see, and Ears to hear. Such was their Obstinacy, and *Infidelity*, that they would not be persuaded to confide in his Promises, or rely upon his Sufficiency, without fresh Experiments of his Omnipotence; as often as in their perverse, and petulant Humour, they made bold to call for them. Nay, so desperate was their Folly, that they had once thought of withdrawing themselves from God's Protection, to whose *outstretched Arm*, they owed their Deliverance, and returning back into *Egypt*: And at another Time so prodigious was their Stupidity, that they set up an Idol of their own making, to rival God, and rob him of his Glory; they *worshipped a molten Calf fashioned out of their own Ear-rings*, and said, *These be thy Gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the Land of Egypt.* Exod. xxxii. 4.

Now all these *Things* happen'd unto them for *Ensamples*; and so the *Psalmist* applies them by way of Caution to the People of his Time: And from him they are here borrow'd Pf. xcvi.



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SERM. borrow'd by the *Apostle*, and seasonably

V. urg'd upon some of their Descendents now  
 ~~~~~ become Converts to the Faith of *Christ*.

Ver. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. *Wherefore as the holy Ghost saith, to Day if ye will hear his Voice, harden not your Hearts, as in the Provocation, in the Day of Temptation in the Wilderness: When your Fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my Works forty Years. Where I was grieved with that Generation, and said, They do alway err in their Heart, and they have not known my Ways; so I sware in my Wrath, they shall not enter into my Rest.*

AND then follows the Application of the Text: *Take heed Brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil Heart of Unbelief, in departing from the living God.* And the *Apostle* pursues this Argument throughout this, and a good Part of the next Chapter, as thinking it of peculiar Use, and Force, to prevent these new Converts from falling from their Stedfastness, and forfeiting the blessed Privileges of their *Christian* Profession: And in order to keep their Hope erect, and their Caution awake, he repeats the Admonition, and endeavours to leave it, fix'd in their Minds, *Ver. 11.*

of

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of the Chapter ensuing: *Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any Man fall after the same Example of Unbelief;* plainly implying, that through Constancy, and Perseverance, they might expect to obtain, if not a Respite from their present Troubles, yet a final Rest from all their Labours, in that Kingdom which cannot be moved; the Type of which, the earthly *Canaan*, their Fathers forfeited, through their incurable *Infidelity*; which must needs therefore be an Example fatal to be imitated.

HAVING given you this general Light into the Text, and Context, I shall hence raise two Observations, and such as may be useful to modern *Christians*, to whom I could wish the Words before us were less applicable than they really are.

TAKE heed, Brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil Heart of Unbelief, in departing from the living God.

WHERE 'tis obvious to observe these two Things:

I. *First*, THE Property of *Infidelity*, or *Unbelief*, whereby it is describ'd, and di-

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M

stinguish'd;

SERM. distinguish'd; it consisteth in *departing from*
 V. *the living God*; it is in Effect, an Apostasy,
 or Defection from him.

II. *Secondly*, THE true Rise, and Birth of it; it naturally proceeds from an *evil Heart*; from some vicious Habit wilfully cherish'd and indulg'd.

I SHALL spend some Thoughts upon each of these Heads:

I. THE *First* Thing I would offer to your Observation is the Property, by which *Infidelity*, or *Unbelief* is here describ'd, and distinguish'd: It consisteth, according to our *Apostle*, in *departing from the living God*; it is, in Effect, an Apostasy, or Defection from him.

INCREDULITY, in the general Notion, is a Temper of Mind, that renders Men averse to yield their Assent to those Truths, for which there is proper, and sufficient Evidence.

INFIDELITY implies a particular Averseness to assent to those Truths which are proposed to our Belief, upon *divine* Testimony, or some other Manifestation of the
 Godhead,

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Godhead, equivalent thereunto. And SERM.

THIS *Infidelity* may be consider'd in a V.
twofold Respect, either as rejecting sacred, and revealed Truths, upon their first Proposal; or else renouncing them, after they have been deliberately receiv'd, and embrac'd. In the former Case, the Sublimity of the Truths themselves, or their Contrariety to prevailing Opinion, and Practice, may beget such a sudden, and violent Prejudice against them, as is likely to preclude all fair Examination. And this may in some small Degree extenuate, tho' it is very far from excusing the Want of due Attention, and Regard to a divine Testimony. In the latter Case, Prejudice is supposed to have been once remov'd, Reason enlighten'd, and the Judgment to have surrender'd upon full Conviction; and to renounce the Belief of any Thing so grounded, is industriously to stifle an Evidence too clear, and strong to be resisted, it is to rebel against the Light, it is to deny the Truth, and Faith of God, and to deny the Author, and Revealer of it too, and make him the Liar.

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SERM. AND *Infidelity* in these Circumstances

V. (which are the Circumstances under which the *Apostle* consider'd it) is no better than *Apostasy*; it is to depart from the living God, and to cast him off, as if he were not worthy to be believed or trusted.

THE Example of the antient *Jews*, (which is recorded for a Warning to those of their Posterity, who became *Christians*, and to all *Christians* after them) will illustrate this Point very clearly.

THEY were conducted out of *Egypt* by a mighty Train of Wonders; which were a most glorious Testimony of the divine Presence, and Power, and Providence, all engag'd in their Defence; and were abundantly sufficient to support them under the Belief, and Hope of seeing God's Promises, and their own Deliverance fully compleated. And yet God complains of them, that they tempted, and proved him, and saw his Works Forty Years. Their reiterated Experience could not but convince them, that they must needs be safe under the Guardianship of the Almighty; and when the Sense of this was strong, and lively upon their Minds, then believed they his Words,

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Words, and sang his Praise. But they soon SERM.
forgot his Works, and waited not for his V.

Counsel. They soon grew as distrustful and impatient, as if they had seen none of the Acts of his Might, none of the Instances of his Goodness, or Truth. The Remembrance of the last Miracle was lost in the Noise of the next Murmur. Every new Difficulty appear'd to them insuperable; and so far were they from expecting any Aid from God, that through mere Despair, they were for turning their Backs upon him, and giving themselves up again into Bondage. Thus did their Disbelief of the divine Veracity, and Power, whereof they had so many convincing Proofs, tempt them to depart from the living God. And depart from him they actually did, and in the most scandalous Manner, when they went a whoring after their own Inventions, and set up a lifeless Image for their Deliverer.

AND in like Manner, among us Christians, to renounce the Belief of any Thing that has the undoubted Attestation of Miracles, is to renounce the divine Attributes, which is renouncing the Godhead; it is

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SERM. to deny that God is the God of Truth,
 V, which is denying him to be the true God;
 and therefore a plain Defection from him,
 and a rebellious Opposition to him.

To exemplify this yet farther. The *Gospel* is a divine Revelation, most remarkably attested by a Series of *Miracles*, and *Prophecies*, lending mutual Light, and Strength to each other; And this is Evidence so very clear, and equally so to all Capacities, that no considering Man, who has had the early Advantages of a *Christian* Education, can entertain any reasonable Doubt of it. Now it is confessed there are Mysteries contain'd in this *Gospel*, too difficult to be comprehended; and there have been Dangers sometimes attending the Profession of it very terrible to be encounter'd. But the Difficulty of comprehending, or the Danger of professing revealed Truths, neither alters nor weakens the Evidence, on which they are built. The *Miracles*, and *Prophecies* by which the *Gospel* is confirm'd, are Facts that stand uncontested. And Mysteries are no harder to be conceiv'd than Miracles, nor is any Power of Man a Match for Omnipotence.

To

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To insist therefore on more Evidence, SERM.
more Assurance for the Belief of the Go- V.
spel, than what we already have, is pre-
sumptuously to tempt God, as did the *Is-*
raelites of old: But to relapse from *Chri-*
stianity to *Infidelity*, is to revolt from, and
usurp over him; it is to cry down God,
and his infallible *Revelation*, and set up
the Idol of our own Reason to give out
Oracles; it is to set aside the divine Wis-
dom, and Power, as incompetent Witnes-
ses of Truth; and to constitute our own
Folly, and Weakness, the supreme Judges
of it. Which is the most daring Piece of
Defiance against the most High, that *a-*
postate Creatures can well be guilty of.

BUT to bring this Instance Home to the
Text, from whence it ariseth. The su-
pereminent Dignity of our *Saviour's* Per-
son, not only as a *Prophet* from God, but
as his eternal Son (upon which alone the
Efficacy of his Priesthood depends. I say,
this among other mysterious Truths) is ex-
pressly reveal'd to us in divers Places of the
the *New Testament*. And this Argument
is particularly handled by *St. Paul*, and
carried into its just Consequences, in this

SERM. Epistle to the *Hebrews*: He lays his Foundation in the first Chapter, where *Christ* is not only preferr'd before the whole angelical Order, but exalted above the Rank of any created Being. He is styl'd *the Son of God, the Brightness of his Glory, and the express Image of his Person*: The Acts of Omnipotence, and the incommunicable Attributes of the Godhead are ascrib'd to him; the Creation and Conservation of the World, (and that by the mere *Word* of his Power) supreme Dominion, Eternity of Existence and Immutability. And the *Apostle* having thus cloath'd him, if I may so speak, with the Robes of divine Majesty, having thus secur'd the Honour, and Authority of his Mission, and Office, exhorts his Brethren in the 1st Verse of the 3^d Chapter to consider him as the *Apostle, and High-Priest of their Profession*. And the Regard, and Veneration that is due to him as such, he urges as the proper Motive to Stedfastness, and Perseverance. Seeing then (says he) that we have a great High-Priest, that is passed into the Heavens, *Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our Profession*. And the Admonition of the Text is resolv'd into the same

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same Reason, Take heed, Brethren, lest there **SEEM**
be in any of you an evil Heart of Unbelief, **V.**
in departing from the living God, and de-
spoiling him of his just Honours. And
since the Divinity of Christ is here, and
elsewhere so solemnly asserted, since the
Revelation is plain, though the Mystery it
self be inexplicable; for those who are ac-
quainted with Revelation, to attack this My-
stery with Quirks, and Subtleties, or to re-
ject it as incredible, is to depart from the
living God, both Father, and Son: For as Jo. v. 26.
the Father hath Life in himself, so hath he
given to the Son, to have Life in himself.
It is to dispute the Mastery with the Fa-
ther in the Depths of his own Wisdom, e-
ven about the Manner of his Existence,
and the Communication of his divine Es-
sence: It is to dispute the very Godhead
with the Son, pertinaciously maintaining
it to be only titular, and not real; though
the same St. John is express in asserting,
that he is the true God, and eternal Life.
And as he that believeth not God, hath made 1 Jo. v. 10.
him a Liar, because he believeth not the Record
that God gave of his Son, So whosoever de-
nieth the Son, the same hath not the Father 1 John ii.
22, 23.
(for

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SERM. (*for he and the Father are one*): And he is,

V. *Antichrist, who denieth the Father, and the Son.* So that that pretended Christian (or let him call himself as he pleases) who reads the *Gospel*, and yet is an Unbeliever in the fundamental Point of *Christ's* Divinity; has desperately plunged *himself* into the very Gulph of *Antichristian Apostasy*, which leads, it may be justly fear'd, to irrecoverable Perdition.

Heb. vi.
4, 5, 6.

AT least dreadful, very dreadful (to whomsoever it belongs) is the Sound of these Words: *It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly Gift, and were made Partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good Word of God, and Powers of the World to come; if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto Repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open Shame.*

IF the falling away, against which all this is denounc'd, be to be understood (as most probably it is) of a total Abnegation, and malicious Rejection of the *Gospel*, and its whole Contents, as fabulous and false; would it not make one tremble for the modern

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modern *Deists*, to whose Character it answers so exactly? For they are *Renegades* from *Christianity*; and they do treat the Author of the blessed *Gospel*, as if he were no better than an Impostor, and deserv'd the ignominious Death which he voluntarily underwent, which some of them have been audacious enough to express. And although those *Heretics* who deny the Divinity of *Christ*; do not withal reject the whole *Gospel*, nor directly call in Question its Authority; yet they maim it in a principal Part, they take off the great Hinge, upon which *Christian* Economy chiefly turns, and whether they will stop here, or what they may next renounce, Nobody can undertake for them, nor they for themselves. And it cannot chuse but give Pain to any compassionate Soul, to see Men so near the Brink of a desperate Precipice.

AND howsoever we are to understand what is said of those that fall away; that it is impossible to renew them again unto Repentance; whether this be made impossible by some fix'd Decree of God, or whether it only becomes so in the Order of

SERM.
V.

SERM. of Things as by him appointed, because

V. there are no Means or Helps for their Recovery, which they have not already maliciously defeated, and for such *Miscreants* no extraordinary Remedy can be expected: I say, however this may be, it is remarkably true, in Fact, that of those who are Apostates from the *Christian* Faith, or even the bold, and subtle *Heretics*, there are exceeding few, who have ever been reclaim'd from their pernicious Errors, or brought to give Glory to God, and Satisfaction to his Church, by a sincere Confession, and Retraction of them. They are rather observ'd for the most Part to proceed, persist, and conclude *like Men of corrupt Minds, reprobate concerning the Faith*; as if they were not only vitiated in Judgment, but even render'd incapable of judging aright, or coming to any Acknowledgment of divine Truth, as if their Perinaciousness were really invincible, and their Blindness incurable.

WELL therefore may any *Christian* Heart bleed for those who are so spiritually benumm'd, that they have no Sense of their Sin, no Concern for themselves.

AND

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AND let us take heed, Brethren, as we SERM.
love our own Souls, lest there be in any of V.
us an evil Heart of Unbelief, in departing
from the living God, for Fear it should ne-
ver more be in our Power to return to
him again.

AND the Lord preserve all honest Minds
from this most dangerous Snare of the De-
vil. Amen.

*Now to God the Father, God the Son,
and God the Holy Ghost, &c.*



SERMON

A. D. 1885

and the other side of the road

7. When the water is about 150 mm deep

1911

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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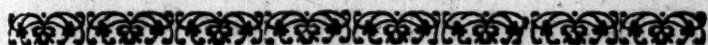
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S E R M O N VI.

A Discourse against Infidelity.



H E B. iii. 12.

Take heed, Brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil Heart of Unbelief, in departing from the living God.



FROM these Words, when I S E R M. VI. enter'd upon them, I offer'd these two Things to your Observation. I

I. First,

SERM.

V.

I. *First*, THE Property by which *Infidelity* is here describ'd, and distinguish'd: It consisteth ἐν τῇ ἀποστῆναι ἀπὸ θεῶ ζῶντος, in departing from the living God; it is in Effect, a sort of *Apostasy*, or Defection from him.

II. *Secondly*, THE true Rise, and Birth of it: It naturally proceedeth from an evil Heart; from some vitious Habits wilfully cherish'd, or indulg'd.

I. THE *First* Point I have already discours'd on at large, and have shewn, that *Infidelity*, which implies an Aversion to the Belief of such Things as are evidenced by divine Testimony, or some other Manifestation of the Deity thereunto equivalent, is no better than a Defection from God; especially in those Circumstances under which the Apostle here considers it. That is to say, when Men are tempted to renounce the Belief of those Things which upon due Conviction, they had once receiv'd as true, and are as plainly attested so to be by God himself.

THIS

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THIS was notoriously the Case of the *Israelites* of old; from whose unhappy Example the Admonition of the Text takes its Rise, and Force. The mighty, and marvellous Acts of the Lord, in their first Deliverance out of *Egypt*, and the Train of Wonders that still waited on them, were, and must be convincing Demonstrations to them, of the Sufficiency of God's Providence, and the Security of his Promises; and they might, and ought to have render'd their Faith, and Affiance in him unmoveable, as his Counsels were immutable. But their many Murmurings, and Mutinies under the Safeguard of the Almighty, were so many Declarations on their Part, that they did not think him worthy to be believ'd, or relied on; and this, notwithstanding the most sensible Experience to the contrary. And this puts them upon the desperate Project of actual Desertion, even of returning into *Egypt*, as if it had been more eligible to be in the Hands of their cruel Oppressors, than of such a Protector. Nay, to make their Rebellion, as provoking as possible, they revolted from the living God, to a lifeless Image of

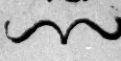
SERM.

VI.

SERM. their own making; and said, with equal
 VI. Stupidity, and Ingratitude, *These be thy*
 ~~~~~ *Gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out*  
*of the Land of Egypt.* And thus behold  
 their *Unbelief* completed in *Apostasy*.

AND parallel to this, in the main Strokes  
 of Resemblance, is the Case of the modern  
*Deists*, who, from *Christians* by Education,  
 commence *Infidels* upon deliberate Thought.  
 Not that *Christianity* wants its proper,  
 and sufficient Evidence: It is most remar-  
 kably attested to be a Revelation from  
 God, by a Series of *Prophecies*, and *Mira-*  
*cles*, lending mutual Light, and Strength  
 to each other; and this is Evidence that  
 stands full in the View, of all that have  
 been bred among *Christians*, and employ-  
 ed any the least Thought upon the Sub-  
 ject: And it is Evidence most admirably  
 well fitted, for the Conviction of all sober,  
 and ingenuous Minds: Nay, 'tis such Evi-  
 dence, as they who are most disingenuous  
 cannot well except against, they cannot  
 say wherein it is defective; they cannot  
 insist upon any higher, or stronger Degree  
 of Evidence, but what would offer Vio-  
 lence to their rational Faculties, and force  
 them

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them to believe whether they will or no. SERM.  
Since then the *Gospel Revelation* is so plain- VI.  
ly seal'd with the Signet of God's right   
Hand, those *Miscreants*, who can find in  
their Hearts to renounce the Belief of it,  
do in Effect declare, that God is not to be  
believ'd upon his most solemn Word, and  
Testimony, that even Omniscience, and  
Omnipotence in Conjunction are no com-  
petent Witnesses of Truth, but they them-  
selves the supreme Judges of it: And thus,  
in attacking *Christianity*, they are found to  
fight against God, in revolting from it  
they *apostatize* from him, and set up for  
themselves.

AND those perverse *Hereticks* are in too  
great a Proportion, Partakers of the same  
Guilt; who, though they do not reject the  
*Gospel*, or question its divine Authority, yet  
cannot digest those mysterious, and most  
important Truths, upon which the whole  
Christian *Æconomy* mainly depends. For  
Instance; although those Titles, Honours,  
Attributes, and Works, which are properly  
divine, be directly ascrib'd to the *Holy Je-*  
*sus*, in divers Places of the *New Testament*;  
yet his Divinity is disown'd, and rejected,

SERM as a Thing incredible, even by some of  
 VI. those who embrace this very *Gospel*. And  
 why so? Not because the Revelation in  
 this Point is not express enough (for no  
 Words can well be more so) but because  
 the Mystery reveal'd, is too sublime to be  
 comprehended. And what is this, but to  
 admit the Authority of the *Gospel*, on Pur-  
 pose as it were, to make it insignificant?  
 What but to render the Testimony of God,  
 of no Force, wherever Reason finds her-  
 self destitute of other Proof, or wants e-  
 ven the Capacity of conceiving? What's  
 that indeed, but to set up the narrow In-  
 tellect of Man, for the universal Standard  
 of Truth, and to *make God a Liar*, in not  
 believing the Record he hath given of his  
 Son, as not squaring with the Standard?  
 Which is *to depart from the living God*,  
 both Father, and Son: For they are one,  
 and therefore, according to St. *John*, *who-*  
*soever denieth the Son, the same hath not*  
*the Father; and he is Antichrist who deni-*  
*eth the Father, and the Son, i. e.* he stands  
 in direct Opposition to both, who goes a-  
 bout by his own Reasoning, to dissolve that  
 inseparable Relation, and Union between  
 them



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them, which Revelation most expressly as-  
serts. SERM.  
VI.

AND by these Examples, I endeavour'd to explain the Nature, and Property of *Unbelief*, which as it is describ'd in the Text, is a Sort of *Apostasy*, or Defection from God.

II. *Secondly*, THE next Thing I would entreat you to observe, is the true Rise, and Birth of *Infidelity*, or *Unbelief*: It naturally proceedeth from an *evil Heart*, from some vicious Habit wilfully cherish'd, and indulg'd.

THIS the Nature of the Thing, as already set forth, might be sufficient to evince; but the Text plainly implies as much in calling it an *evil Heart of Unbelief*; and the same is farther confirmed by other Texts of Scripture, and Reasons grounded thereupon.

FAITH, according to St. *John*, is Matter of positive Precept, and Duty: *This is his Commandment, that we should believe on the Name of his Son Jesus Christ: And this is the Work of God, that ye believe on him, whom he hath sent.* 1 John ii.  
23.  
John vi.

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SERM. *fidelity* the Opposite to Faith is a Breach  
 VI. of Duty, and the Transgression of a known  
 Law, which is the very Formality of Sin.  
 And were there no other ill Ingredient in  
 it, it is certainly a culpable Perverseness of  
 the Will in any one Point, to dispute, or  
 despise the Authority of our supreme Law-  
 giver.

John xvi.  
8.

AND as our Saviour declares, that *the World should be reprov'd, (or convinced) of Sin, because they believed not on him, so does he pronounce it to be a Sin, void of all Pretext, or Colour; If I had not come, and spoken unto them, they had not had Sin; but now they have no Cloak for their Sin. And the Infidelity of Apostatizing Christians cannot be less, it may justly be thought much more, inexcusable, than that of the unbelieving Jews.*

John xv.  
22.

Mark xvi.  
16.

Rev. xxi.  
8.

AND as Unbelief is undeniably convicted of Guilt in the *Scripture*; so is it as peremptorily sentenc'd to Punishment. *He that believeth not shall be damned, saith he who is Judge of all: And the Fearful, and Unbelieving have their Part allotted in the Lake which burneth with Fire, and Brimstone.*

THE

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THE Arraignment therefore, and Con-  
demnation of *Unbelief* in holy Writ, would VI.  
sufficiently demonstrate it to be the Off-  
spring of a wicked Heart, even though we  
could not so readily assign the particular  
Wickedness that is so apt to proceed from  
Evil to Evil, 'till it terminate in this,  
which is the greatest of all others.

BUT it is very easy to point out the Cau-  
ses, that are naturally productive of it. In-  
deed any corrupt Inclination, or vitious  
Habit wilfully cherished, and indulged,  
must have a fatal Tendency this Way.  
For the *Gospel* is a perfect System of all  
Godliness, and Virtue: And the Belief of  
it strictly binds the Conscience, to the Pra-  
ctice of every moral Duty, without Re-  
servation, or Dispensation. Faith there-  
fore, and a good Conscience must, and  
may easily be held together; but put away  
the latter, and the Shipwreck of the former  
is greatly endanger'd. The habitual Indul-  
gence of any one single Vice, is enough to  
move it from its Anchor: And the strong-  
er the vitious Habit is, the more impatient  
will it be to break those Bands asunder, and



SERM. cast them away thro' *Unbelief*, by which

VI. it is bound to the Yoke of Obedience.

~ BUT some particular Vices there are, more apt than others to give a wrong By-afs, both to the Understanding, and the Will, and to drive, or draw Men into *Infidelity*. In the foremost Rank of which, we may well place Sensuality, for when Men give themselves up to an impure, and dissolute Course of Living; as the Corruptness of their Affections vitiates their Judgments, and makes them less capable of discerning the Evidence of divine Truth; so does the Licentiousness of their Lives strongly tempt them to disbelieve it, and drives them to *Infidelity* for mere Refuge. For whilst they do retain the Belief of the *Gospel*, the severe Injunctions, and terrible Threatnings therein contain'd, must needs be a frequent Check to them in their irregular Pursuits, and a bitter Allay to all the Sweets of Voluptuousness. And in order to be a little at Ease, or to have any true Relish of their beloved Enjoyments, their only Recourse is to the strong Opiate of *Unbelief*; that may lull their Consciences

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sciences asleep, and render them quite in-  
sensible. And when the Matter is once  
drawing towards this Issue; the Interest of  
their Lusts is pretty sure to overpower  
both Reason and Revelation, and make  
them *Infidels* in Spite of both. And this,  
'tis to be feared, is the deplorable Case of  
most of those, who bid open Defiance to  
Religion, who take the Chair of Profession  
in *Infidelity*, and compass Sea and Land to  
make their *Profelytes*. SERM. VI.

BUT there are other evil Habits perhaps  
not so much suspected, or so ill thought  
of as Sensuality, that do give the Inclination an unhappy Bent towards *Unbelief*.  
Such in particular is Ambition, and Vain-Glory, the Operation of which was very  
powerful in the *Jews* of old, and an effectual Bar we find to their Belief in the  
*Messiah*. So says he, who knew what was  
in Man; *How can ye believe which receive* John v.  
*Honour one from another, and seek not the* 44.  
*Honour that cometh from God only?* Nay,  
so strong was this Enchantment, that even  
those who were in Reason convinced, could  
not overcome the Shame of confessing it:  
For *amongst the chief Rulers many believed*

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SERM. on him, (as we read *John xii. 42, 43.*) But

VI. *they did not confess him: lest they should be put out of the Synagogue; for they loved the Praise of Men, more than the Praise of God.* And the high Pretence to more than ordinary Knowledge, as well as Authority in the great ones; was still laid in the Way for a *stumbling Block* to the more ingenuous: *Have any of the Rulers, or of the Pharisees believed on him?* (say they.) *But this People who knoweth not the Law are cursed.* These learned Rabbi's had affected, and acquired to themselves the Reputation of being nicely skilled in the Law, to the least Punctilio of it: Nay, upon this they erected an uncontrollable Authority over the People; and it was beneath Authority so established, to stoop to Instruction, or look out for farther Light; it was beneath such admir'd Teachers, to sit down in the Form of Learners, and to learn of one so *meek and lowly*, and in their Eyes so mean, and contemptible. And being too proud of Heart to acknowledge their own Errors, they resolve to upbraid those of Ignorance, who were of a more docible Disposition, than themselves. They took away the Key

of



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of Knowledge, and they entred not in SERM.  
themselves, and them that were entring in, VI.  
they hindred. Thus did their Affectation  
of Rule, and Authority, founded on the  
Pretence of deep Knowledge, at once make  
them incurably blind in Unbelief; and  
lead their implicate Followers blindfold  
into the same Ditch.

AND this proud, vain-glorious Humour,  
though it may operate somewhat different-  
ly; hath the same fatal Influence in ob-  
structing, undermining, and corrupting the  
Faith of *Christ*, even to this Day. There  
is a peculiar Vanity that sticks close to  
some Men, and makes them affect to be  
reputed cautious Enquirers after Truth,  
sagacious Discoverers, and profound Reason-  
ers; which having once assumed to them-  
selves, they fail not to set up for *Dictators*  
to others, especially in those Enquiries which  
concern Religion. And here you may be  
sure, it is below such exalted Wits to sit  
down at the Feet of *Jesus*, speaking to  
them in his holy *Gospel*, or by his *Embaf-*  
*sadors*; it is doubtless below their inquisi-  
tive Genius, to take up with Evidence  
that lies level to the meanest Capacity, or  
to

SERM. to embrace any Thing for Truth, that they

VI. have not critically examined, and cannot  
throughly comprehend. It is more glorious they think, to lead the Way through Thickets, and over Mountains, than to follow the beaten Track, where there is nothing to be met with but common Notions, and traditionary Opinions; nothing worthy the Pursuit of such noble Understandings. Out of this dull Road therefore they are resolved to break, though it be to throw themselves into an intricate Maze of Doubts, and endless uncertainties; clearing up the Difficulties of Religion, as they go, by weakning the Authority, or extinguishing the Sense of it; 'till at length, they are miserably entangled in some monstrous *Heresy*, or swallow'd up in the *devouring Gulph of Infidelity*. And when Men have thus wilfully darkened, and confounded their own Intellects, it is their Pleasure to puzzle, and mislead other Men's; it is their Ambition to appear considerable at the Head of a Party; and for this End they lie in Wait, for unsettled Heads, who have smattering enough in Learning, to make their Levity  
more

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more easy to be practised upon, especially SERM.  
by the scornful Pretence of exposing the VI.  
Simplicity of the credulous; that is, the  
far greater Part of Mankind; and detect-  
ing the gross Cheats that pass upon such  
vulgar Souls. Which Insinuations do in-  
sensibly convey the Affectation of the  
Teacher into the Scholar, and soon qualify  
the willing *Profelyte*, to commence *Pro-  
fessor* of *Scepticism*, and Irreligion. As  
therefore Sensuality drives great Numbers  
into this Toil, so Pride, and vain Glory  
decoys in many more; so easily is *Hereſy*,  
and *Infidelity* propagated, out of the Cor-  
ruption of humane Nature.

AND indeed, such is the Weakness, as  
well as Corruption of our Nature, that e-  
ven where Men do not prostitute them-  
selves to all Manner of Libertinism, where  
they have no formed Ambition of raising  
a great Name to themselves in Science, or  
being distinguished as the Leaders of a  
Sect; the mere Fondness of Self-Conceit,  
is apt enough to betray those, who are  
strongly possessed with it, into this fatal  
Snare of the Devil. For Self-Conceit,  
gives Men a very untrue Measure, and a  
very

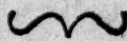


SERM. very undue Value of their own Abilities;

VI. which makes them equally prone to Error, and averse to Conviction. It prevents Sedateness, and Solidity of Judgment, lest the Deliberation required to it, should argue Slowness of Parts, and Want of Penetration. It precludes the wiser Determination of second Thoughts, lest it should seem to imply the Commission, and Retraction of a Mistake. It causes Men to disrelish receiv'd Truths, because they require no great Acuteness, to find them out, but are obvious to the Notice of others, as well as themselves: It disgusts them more especially against the receiv'd, and most fundamental Truths of Religion, because there is a more general Consent in them, than in other Things; and therefore the Singularity of their Dissent puffs up these self Admirers, with an high Opinion, that they are more accurate in judging, and sharper in penetrating into Things, than other Men are: For which Reason such Men are wont to be peculiarly delighted with *Paradoxes* in Divinity, because they are hard to be conceiv'd by others; and as violently prejudiced against

*Mysteries,*

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*Mysteries*, because they are too hard to be SERM.  
conceiv'd, even by themselves, *who are so* VI.  
*wise in their own Eyes.* Here therefore they   
resolutely stick, let the Revelation be never  
so plain: The more they are opposed, the  
more they are confirmed in their *Hetero-*  
*doxes*: Let the concurrent Judgment of the  
Catholic Church be never so expressly a-  
gainst them; it shall weigh nothing: Their  
Opposers must all be *Idiots*, the Pretenders  
to Learning all bewildred, and perfectly  
void, either of Judgment, or Sincerity.  
But for themselves they are surrounded  
with Light; all with them is clear to De-  
monstration; they seem to themselves re-  
serv'd for these happy Discoveries, because  
they alone have made strict Researches af-  
ter Truth, entirely free from Prejudice,  
and Partiality; which is itself so strong a  
Prepossession, so strange, and blind an In-  
fatuation, as bespeaks the Men to be im-  
pregnable in their own Conceits; and e-  
qually incapable of being confuted by  
Reason, or determin'd by Authority, be  
their Errors never so irrational, or anti-  
scriptural. Thus does the reigning Habit  
of Self-Conceit, which in common Mat-  
ters

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SERM. ters exposes its Owner but for a *Fop*, lead

VI. those, who will needs be wise above other  
 ~~~~~ Men, into the violent Temptation of turning *Hereticks*, or *Unbelievers*. And thus have I instanced in some of those vitious Habits, which being wilfully cherished in the Heart, do naturally give it an unhappy Propensity towards *Unbelief*.

BUT is *Unbelief*, or *Misbelief* after all, such a wilful, and sinful Distemper of Heart, as has been represented? Some in their abundant Tenderneſs, take the Liberty to ſay not; and they think they can make good their Plea: *First*, becauſe it is not in a Man's Power to believe, or diſbelieve juſt what he will, he muſt of Neceſſity be determined to either, as the Evidence ſhall appear to him, and therefore, if he is miſdetermined, the Error muſt be involuntary. And

Secondly, BECAUSE it is poſſible for one that is a *Heretick*, or *Unbeliever*, to be a good moral Man for all that: And that is the main Thing that is needful.

BUT each Branch of this Aſſertion is equally bold, and fallacious. *First*, it is a confident Falſehood, to aſſert; that it is not

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in a Man's Power to believe, or disbelieve ^{SERM.}
what he will; and that therefore his Fault ^{VI.}
(if he incurs any) is involuntary. For doubt-
less all Commands, and Prohibitions, sup-
pose Men to be free, and must directly af-
fect the Will, else they could not oblige
the Conscience; and Faith, we know, is in
express Terms commanded, and *Unbelief*
forbidden in holy Writ. Nay our *Saviour*
hath peremptorily declar'd, that *he that*
believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth
not shall be damned; and 'tis as unreasona-
ble, as 'tis irreverent to think, that God
should not put that in Mens Power, upon
which their Salvation, and Damnation is
to depend; it is palpably absurd to imagine,
that he should require any Thing of his
Creatures, that is out of their Power; or
punish them for any Thing that is una-
voidable.

BUT besides, 'tis notorious, both in Rea-
son, and Fact, whatever vain *Philosophy*
may have taught to the contrary; that the
Will hath oftentimes the chief Stroke in
determining our Assent, or Dissent to such
Things, as are proposed to our Belief.
An undeniable Instance of which may be

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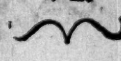
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fetch'd,

SERM. fetched, even from the common Occurrences of Life; for there is scarce a Report, or Piece of Intelligence, that passes up and down, in which the Interests, or Affections of Men are at all concerned; but is either believed, or disbelieved, just as their Will inclines.

VI.  AND if we observe with any Attention, how our Belief, or Disbelief of Things is wont to be influenced, we shall find that the Will has much the same Power in determining us, as has the Hand that holds the Ballance. If the Hand be steady, as well as the Scales even, the greatest Weight will certainly tend downwards. But if the Position of the Hand be but a little varied, it may contrary to its own Tendency, be determined upwards.

IN like Manner, if the Capacity of judging be equal, and the Will impartial; the Assent will naturally follow clear, and sufficient Evidence: But if the Bent of the Will stand otherwise; that very sufficient Evidence shall, (how clear soever in itself) lose all its Force, and Efficacy. Nay, it is easy to put the Case, wherein the same Person shall believe one Thing, and disbelieve another,
upon

upon the same Kind of Evidence, and with SERM.
this Difference too, that the Degree of E- VI.
vidence shall be higher and brighter, for 
that which is rejected as false, than for that
which is admitted as true.

FOR Example, a *Scholar* may admit
(as most *Scholars* do) *Cæsar's* Commenta-
ries to be in the main a true *History*, upon
the common *Criteria*s, or Grounds of
Credibility; and yet this very *Scholar*, if
he professes *Deism*, shall not so readily as-
sent to the Truth of the *Gospel History*,
tho' it has all the most indubitable Marks
of moral Certainty, that any other *History*
hath, or can have; and hath this corroborat-
ing Circumstance peculiar to itself, that the
Writers of it shed their own dearest Blood
in Attestation of its Verity. Now in this
Case, I say, the Credibility of the *Gospel*
History, being not only equal, but far su-
perior to that of any other *History* what-
soever; how comes it to pass, that the les-
ser Evidence shall preponderate, and not
the greater? And since the natural Capa-
city of judging in the same Person must
be allow'd to be equal; what can the Rea-
son be of such unequal Conduct? The

SERM. Reason manifestly is, that the Affections
VI. have brib'd the Will to influence the Judgment, and therefore the Man, though he is willing enough to believe any reputable *Historian*, yet is he, (for private Views) unwilling to afford the same Credit to the *Evangelists*. And consequently, it is as notorious in Fact, that Mens Belief, or Disbelief of Things, is subject to the Determination of the Will; as it is, that there is such a Sect, as that of *Deists* in the World. And this is a sensible, familiar Argument, much more forcible to prove the Sway, and Influence the Will has in such Cases, than any *Philosophical* Subtlety can be to disprove it. Nor will it be of any Avail to urge the trite Observation here, that the Will must of Necessity follow the last Dictate of the Understanding, and embrace, or reject Things according as they are represented; for it is the same Soul, that both willeth, and understandeth; although we in an unaccountable Way, both of thinking and speaking, are wont to consider these different Faculties of acting in the Soul, as different Agents. And it is in the Power of the Soul,
thus

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thus capable of willing, and understanding S E R M.
(by its own inherent Liberty of acting) to VI.
employ or to suspend, to intend or to re-
mit the Exercise of its intelligent Faculty, about such, and such certain Objects;
and to bestow, or not bestow, due En-
quiry, and Examination into the Agree-
ment, or Disagreement of such, and such
certain Ideas, and into the Motives of As-
sent, with Respect to such, and such Ob-
jects as are proposed to its Belief: And all
this being undeniably in the Power of the
Soul, as a free Agent, whenever any Per-
son is endued with a competent Capacity
of judging, and is furnished with the pro-
per Means of Information, and Motives of
Assent; if that Person in these Circum-
stances, shall reject any Thing as incredible
which is really probable; it is notorious he
must be a wilful *Disbeliever*, even in De-
spight of his own Understanding; because,
as the Circumstances are put, there is no-
thing wanting but the Will, to enquire in-
to the Reason of Things, and the Nature
of the Evidence before him, to determine
him to be a *Believer*. And consequently
in all Cases so circumstantiated, the Mis-

SERM. takes of the Understanding (to conform
 VI. to the common Way of speaking) are owing beyond all Dispute to the Misconduct of the Will; the Will obstructs the Lights, that should inform, and direct the Understanding; and having thus industriously blinded its own Guide, is reduced under a Necessity of following it as blindly.

AND therefore the Disbelief of all, or any of the chief Articles of the *Christian* Faith, by those who have been made acquainted with the Principles of our Religion, (which is the Case in its true Circumstances) is not only strictly imputable to the Will, but, as springing from a most perverse Abuse of that noble Faculty, is the more heinously culpable, and justly damnable. It appears then, that it is much more in Mens Power to believe, or disbelieve as they will, than is commonly apprehended; nay, that the Will hath the chief Sway in determining Mens Belief and Unbelief, in all Matters, where Interest, or Affection intermeddle, and most especially in the great Point of Religion, which is that now before us.

Secondly,

Secondly, BUT be it so, may some think, SERM.
there is a *Salvo* still left for those, that VI.
don't find themselves induced to believe, what is imposed upon their Faith; for a Man may possibly be an *Unbeliever*, and yet a good moral Man notwithstanding, and that's the main Thing necessary. Now this must be understood, either of *Unbelievers* (in the grossest Sense of the Word) who don't admit so much as the first Principles of Religion; or of such *Unbelievers* as do not give Credit to reveal'd Religion; or else of such *Unbelievers* as do embrace, what is plain in the *Christian Revelation*, i. e. the Morality, but cannot give their Assent to the sublimer Doctrines, which are called *Mysteries*.

Of each of which *Unbelievers*, let us enquire a little, how far they are capable of being good moral Men, or have any Title so to be accounted. And in the first Place I demand; is it to be deem'd a Thing feasible, or credible, that he who is no *Believer* in the grossest Sense, i. e. indeed of no Religion, should nevertheless be a strict Practiser of moral Virtue, which is what I conceive to be meant by a good

SERM. moral Man? This is so very shocking at
 VI. the very first Proposal, that he who can
 believe it, may, I think, even believe what
 he pleases; and is a fit Example to illustrate my former Argument, concerning the Power of the Will over the Understanding. We know who at least hath
 Heb. xi. 6. said on the contrary, that *without Faith, it is impossible to please God; for he that cometh unto God, must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* The Truth of the Assertion is evident to Reason, that the Practice of Virtue cannot stand, unless it rest upon the Foundation of this Faith; because without that Foundation (as the Nature, and Condition of Mankind is) it would want its necessary Support, and Encouragement. For that Man who doth not consider Virtue, under the Notion of Duty, and practise it with Regard, and Submission to God as the *Lawgiver*, and *Judge*, who will reward the Good, and punish the Evil; will hardly think himself under any other Obligation, or Inducement to be uniformly virtuous. Because if Virtue be not a Duty, and not to be rewarded as such

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such hereafter, nor the contrary punished; S E R M.
then, when the Practice of Virtue shall VI.
happen notably to interfere with our pre-
sent Inclinations, or Interests, there can be
no other effectual Restraint, or Tie found
to bind us up to the rigid Observance
of it.

THERE is indeed a *modern Refiner* upon
common Notions, or rather a Subverter of
common Principles, who affects to appear
wiser than other Men; by shewing them
how to be wittily wicked. This Man ad-
vances it as a Problem possible enough to
be true, that a Society of *Atheists* might
make a Shift to live comfortably enough
together, in the interchangeable Perfor-
mance of good Offices, and the reasona-
ble Practice of social Virtues. A *Paradox*
that will never be confirmed, nor confuted
from Experience; because there never was
a *Commonwealth* composed of such *Ani-
mals*, nor is ever like to be; which by the
Way is a pretty strong Presumption against
the Truth of the Problem itself.

BUT the general Reason I but now in-
sisted on, will be sufficient to confute it;
i. e. that nothing less than a Sense of Du-
ty,

SER M. ty, and a fitting Respect to the *Recompence*

VI. *of Reward*, can effectually oblige, or determine Men to be virtuous, where Virtue, and temporal Interest are inconsistent with each other. I say, this Reason is sufficient to shew all such imaginary Schemes to be utterly impracticable; because all Compacts entred into upon any other Principle, would be found too loose a Cement, either to knit a Society into Union at first, or to keep it firm, and compact, if we could suppose it once formed.

AND the Reason that this vain Man offers, in Opposition to the common Sense of Mankind, is as frivolous, as it is fallacious; it is no more than this; that it is too frequent amongst Men, even such as do embrace the Principles of Religion, to suffer themselves to be influenced by other Motives in the Conduct of their Lives; that humane Virtue flows for the most Part, not from any Conformity to Principle, but another Cause; that it is the Offspring, not of Duty, but Convenience; that Chastity with the Women, is but the tender Care of Reputation; and Courage with
the

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the Men, a nice Point of Honour, and that SERM.
such Views, and Motives as these, would VI.
have the same Influence they now have, in
a Society of *Atheists*; and that such a So-
ciety might therefore subsist upon this Ba-
sis, in tolerable good Order.

WHERE 'tis too obvious to escape Ob-
servation; that this *Blasphemer* of Reli-
gion, is at the same time a Reviler of hu-
mane Nature; or at least delights to mag-
nify its Infirmities. He supposes the Ge-
nerality of Mankind almost to be void of
Religion, or under no Influence from it,
as a Proof that there is no Necessity of be-
ing religious, and that Religion is useless
to Society. But surely, this cannot be the
impartial State of the Case; Morality gene-
rally speaking cannot be that empty Shew
and Cheat, as he would represent it. Bad
as the World is, there are great Numbers
it is to be hoped, who do seriously, and
sincerely put themselves under the Gui-
dance of Religion; and do conduct the
main Tenor of their Lives accordingly.
And doubtless, the Terrors of Religion do
help to restrain many more, from being
exorbitantly vitious, whom the more in-
genuous

SERM. genuine Motive of Love does not work
 VI. upon so effectually, as to win them to a
 perfect good Liking of their Duty, and
 make them stedfast, and uniform in the
 Practice of it.

BUT, supposing that the Degeneracy of
 Manners were as great as he represents
 it, and there were as little true Virtue in
 the World as he reports, what Force of
 Argument is there in all this, to prove;
 that the Practice of moral Virtue may be
 maintain'd, and humane Society supported
 without the Aid of religious Principles?
 For the Sophistry concludes all along from
 a Particular, to the Universal, and comes
 but to this at last. Many Men who pro-
 fess Religion, are not influenced in their
 Actions by their religious Principles; and
 therefore there is no Need, nor Use of any
 such Principles. Many Men have no Re-
 gard to their Duty; and therefore it were
 no great Matter, if the Sense of Duty were
 universally extinguish'd: The World is
 very wicked, with all the supposed Influ-
 ences of Religion, and therefore could be
 no wickedder without all Religion. Many
 Mens Virtues are but counterfeit, and

yet not found to be destructive of hu-^{SERM.}mane Society; and therefore if all Vir-^{VI.}tue were counterfeit, and all Religion abolished; Society might still subsist, and stand fixed upon no Foundation. These are wild Conceits indeed, for Conclusions I cannot call them: It would certainly be more reasonable to conclude, since the World is so wicked, and disorderly as it is, notwithstanding all the Motives, and Restraints of Religion, that are so well fitted to operate upon Mens Hopes, and Fears; I say, it would be much more reasonable to conclude, that if all Men were as free from these Obligations, and Restraints, and as devoid of Principles, as some are; the Licentiousness of Practice would be unbounded, and the Confusion intolerable. So false is the Suggestion, that he, who is no *Believer*, may be a strict Practiser of Virtue, to which he has nothing constantly to bind, and engage him. So vain the Imagination, that there might be a happy Settlement, in a Commonwealth of *Atheists*, where the very Ligaments of Society are wanting.

THE common Principles of Faith then,
it

SERM. it must be granted, are necessary to the
 VI. Support of Virtue. But no Need, may
 ~~~~~ some think, of having any Thing farther  
 obtruded upon our Belief. The Belief of  
 God's Existence, and a future State of  
 Rewards, and Punishments, which are  
 the Principles of natural Religion, are suf-  
 ficient, they may think, to animate, and  
 support our virtuous Endeavours, and  
 therefore there could be no Necessity of  
 Revelation; and surely it will not be de-  
 nied, that a Man may be a good moral  
 Man, and yet not a Believer of reveal'd  
 Religion.

BUT this too is a very hasty, as well as  
 bold Conclusion. For admitting it possi-  
 ble for a Man to be a good moral Liver,  
 upon the Principles of natural Religion;  
 I would fain know how any Man now-a-  
 days, and in a *Christian* Country, comes to  
 be established in the Belief, even of these  
 Principles. The antient *Philosophers* were  
 as inquisitive, and sagacious (without Di-  
 minution be it spoken) as any of the Mo-  
 derns; and yet they were miserably be-  
 wilder'd, even in the greatest Point of a  
 future State. They seem to have it in  
 View

View sometimes, and aim at it pretty no-  
rably, and make themselves secure of it; VI.  
but then they soon lose Sight of it again  
and find themselves left in great Uncertain-  
ties, and Perplexities. What is it then  
that makes the *Deist* better settled in his  
Judgment than the *Heathen*? It is his Ac-  
quaintance with the *Christian* Revelation,  
which illuminates this dark Point, and  
clears it from all Doubts, and thereby has  
furnished the World with a stronger Sup-  
port, and higher Encouragement to Vir-  
tue, than it had before; and consequently,  
if we should suppose a *Deist* to be truly vir-  
tuous, it must be upon a *Christian* Prin-  
ciple, and he is manifestly beholden to  
Revelation for it, loath as he is to own it:  
And I desire to know, whether so much Ar-  
rogance, and Ingratitude, as appears in his  
disowning it, can be thought fairly to con-  
sist with the Supposition of a true, and  
genuine Virtue, or suit with the Character  
of a virtuous Person?

MOREOVER, if we consider the Matter  
attentively; the true Standard of moral  
Virtue, and the just Extent, and Compass  
of it; is only to be learned from the *Chri-  
stian*



SERM. *sian* Revelation. The *Philosophers* indeed

VI. have severally laid down many good Rules in Morality, and said many Things finely, and made some noble Flights, too lofty indeed ever to be reach'd in Practice; but with all their grave Speeches, and severest Precepts, there is something still defective; nay something irregular, and blame-worthy intermingled. But in the *Gospel*, *whatsoever Things are true, whatsoever Things are just, whatsoever Things are pure, whatsoever Things are lovely, and of good Report*: All these Things without the Mixture of any Thing that is otherwise, are perfectly compriz'd, and strictly required. And since the *Gospel* is the only compleat System of moral Duties, (which it is in vain for any Body to deny) whosoever would be reputed a Practiser of Virtue, must either be acquainted with the *Gospel*, and as far as Morality goes, an Observer of it; or else in some Measure unacquainted with his Duty, and consequently must fall short of it in Practice; unless it could be pretended, that some of the moral Duties in *Christianity*, are not Duties of universal Obligation, which yet 'tis unde-

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undeniable they are all of them; deducible SERM.  
from the natural Notions we have of God, VI.  
and evidently perfective of the Nature of   
Man.

IT is farther therefore to be observ'd; that the Practice of moral Virtue, as it is enjoin'd in the *Gospel*, is establish'd upon the clearest Principles, enforced by the most powerful Motives, and strengthened by such divine Aids, as will appear to be no more than necessary, if only we compare the Difficulty of our Duty, with the Infirmities of our Nature; of which both the *Deist*, and the *Christian* have too sensible Experience. For what is it that the *Gospel* principally requires of us? The Love of God in the intensest Degree; with all our Heart and Mind, and Strength; and a zealous Imitation of all his moral Perfections, so far as they are imitable, even *to be holy as he is holy, and pure as he is pure; nay, and perfect as he is perfect:* And strict, and impartial Justice, never varying from that inflexible Rule of *doing as we would be done by*, a fervent, and unconfined Charity, extending to our bitterest Enemies, and the Forgiveness of the

SERM. greatest Injuries: An Alienation of the Affections from all earthly Things, and the fixing them upon the Things, that are heavenly: A Refusal of such Gratifications as Sense most covets, and a Subjugation of the Flesh, and all fleshly Appetites, even to a Purity in Thought: And in one Word, a Victory over ourselves, and the World, even whilst we are in the Body, and cannot depart out of the World till our appointed Time. These, and such as these are the singular Instances, the elevated Degrees of Virtue, that the *Gospel* requires; which must all be acknowledged to be Virtues of general Obligation, because they do so manifestly tend to the Improvement, and Perfection of humane Nature, and are so many Approaches to a Likeness with God, and Preparations for the Enjoyment of him. But then they are Virtues so difficult in the Attainment to frail Flesh, and Blood, that a Man had need be persuaded, that so is the express Will of God; and that he will exceedingly reward those that submit their own Wills, to his Will, and that he will assist their weak Wills, by the Energy of his free Spirit; that he will accept of their humble



humble, and sincere Endeavours, instead SERM.  
of a Virtue consummated in all the possi- VI.  
ble Instances, and Degrees of it; and their  
unfeigned Repentance, in lieu of sinless  
Perfection: I say, a Man had need be very  
firmly persuaded of all this, who shall un-  
dertake a Task so much above his Strength,  
with any Cheerfulness; or acquit himself  
of it with any reasonable Hopes of Appro-  
bation, or Acceptance. Now it is the *Go-*  
*spel* alone that presents the true Believer  
with explicate Declarations, Assurances,  
and Promises, with Relation to all these  
Things; and therefore the *Deist*, who be-  
lieves not the *Gospel* to be a *Revelation* of  
God's Will, must be totally destitute of some  
of these Helps, and Encouragements to  
Virtue; and of all of them in some Mea-  
sure. And if a *Christian* with all these  
Advantages, finds the Difficulties of Vir-  
tue, not easily, scarce surmountable, and  
the Mastery in it, scarce attainable; surely  
the *Deist* without these Advantages, will  
never be able to acquit himself in all Points  
like a good moral Man, to finish so te-  
dious a Course of Duty; he will rather  
frequently be found failing; and chiefly

SERM there, where his Constancy ought to be  
 VI. most approved, that is in the most difficult  
 Trials. But

*Thirdly*, FARE it as it will with the *Deists*, may some say, there are those who do believe what is plain in the *Gospel*, *i. e.* the *Morality*, though they cannot believe, what they cannot comprehend, *i. e.* the *Mysteries*.

THEY disbelieve *Mysteries*, not seeing what Need, or Use there is of them towards making Men better, which is the apparent Tendency of *Morality*; and *that* therefore they esteem as the main Thing necessary: They embrace *Morality* as being consonant to the natural Notions they have of God, and therefore the more likely to be his Will; but they reject *Mysteries*, as being above their Comprehension, and they cannot think themselves bound to believe they know not what.

Now when we are upon Enquiry, whether a Man of this odd Make, or Temper of Mind, may be a good moral Man, notwithstanding; we must not be understood of the *physical* Possibilities, but only of the *moral* Probabilities of Things; of what is  
 most

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most likely to be, or not to be, the Tem-  
per, Conduct, and Pretences of the Person  
considered. I shall therefore take Notice  
of some shrew'd Exceptions, some great  
Improbabilities, that seem to lie against the  
supposed Virtue of such a Person.

THE *First* Exception is, that the Prin-  
ciple upon which such an one proceeds, is  
not consistent with itself; for he pretends  
to embrace the *moral* Part of the *Gospel*,  
and holds himself obliged to obey it as the  
revealed Will of God, and at the same  
Time, disbelieves the Mysteries, which it  
is the Will of God we should believe, as  
being revealed in the same *Gospel*; and yet  
the Revelation of these Mysteries, is as  
plain, and express, as is that of moral Du-  
ties; although the Things themselves be  
not so intelligible; the Revelation of both  
is equally attested to be from God, and  
stands upon the same Foot of Evidence. It  
is therefore shrewdly to be suspected, that  
he who doth not firmly assent to the one,  
doth not cordially believe, and embrace the  
other; at least not with such an obedient  
Disposition of Heart, as will determine a  
Man to be virtuous, against the Bent of his



SERM. corrupt Will, and Inclinations; which is  
VI. the sure Test of genuine Virtue.

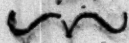
~ AND again, the moral Conduct of such a Person, is the more liable to Exception, because there is no tolerable Reason to be given, why God should not make Trial of his Obedience, by proposing Things to his Belief, that are hard to be conceived; as well as by requiring the Observance of such Things, as are hard to be practised. For (as a great Author well remarks) the Prerogative of God extendeth, as well to the Reason, as Will of Man; so that as we are to obey his Law, though we find a Reluctance in our Will, so are we to believe his Word, though we find a Reluctance in our Reason. And as 'tis no Objection, against the Reasonableness of certain moral Duties, that they are against our natural Propensities, and above our natural Strength, and therefore impracticable; so neither is it fit to be objected in Matters of Faith, that they are above the Reach of natural Reason, and not analagous to any Things else, we know in Nature; and therefore must be incredible. And since God may justly  
require

require, and Man ought to give Proof of SERM.  
his Obedience, both by doing his Will, VI.  
and believing his holy Word; the *half Chri-*  
*stian*, who would be thought a moral Man,  
and yet is no Believer of Mysteries, stands  
manifestly condemned by that known Max-  
im of St. James: *Whoſoever ſhall keep the* Jam. ii. 10.  
*whole Law, and yet offend in one Point he*  
*is guilty of all.*

FOR he that is guilty of one Piece of  
Wilfulness, and Disobedience, may as  
well be guilty of another; as not being re-  
strain'd by the Sense of Duty. The same  
rebellious Reason, the same stubborn Will,  
that tempts him to reject the Belief of  
*Mysteries* as incredible; might have tempt-  
ed him, (if his *Foible* had lain that Way)  
to refuse the Practice of certain moral Vir-  
tues, as impracticable. And where the  
Spirit of Disobedience, so notoriously ma-  
nifests itself, in the Disbelief of *Mysteries*;  
it may well be doubted, whether that  
Man's outward Observance of the moral  
Part of the Law, will deserve to be placed  
to the Account of Virtue; because it ap-  
pears not to proceed from any Reverence

SERM. of God's Authority, or humble Sense of

VI. Duty towards him.



AGAIN *Thirdly*, The Insinuation, that *Mysteries* have no Tendency to make Men better, and therefore are presumed to be unnecessary, is false, and slanderous, and withal so vain, and arrogant; that it administers just Cause of Suspicion, that the *Disbeliever* of *Mysteries* is not so perfect in his Morals, as he should be, because he wilfully deprives himself of one of the chief Helps to the Practice of Virtue.

FOR to shew the Vanity, and Falshood of this Pretence, if there were no other Reason to be assigned, why God requires the Belief of *Mysteries*, it might be sufficient to say; that these Means are admirably well fitted, even to make such *Capillars* as these better than they are, if their own Obstinacy prevented it not; that is to say, by repressing their Pride, and bringing down their high Conceits of themselves, and bringing them to a more humble, teachable, and governable Disposition of Mind.

BUT



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BUT to let that pass, it might be easily SERM.  
made out, if I had Time to enter into the VI.  
Detail; that all the most important Arti-  
cles of our *Christian* Faith, have an imme-  
diate Reference, and an admirable Subser-  
viency to the Purposes of true Religion,  
and Virtue. Let it suffice to Instance in  
one, which is the main Hinge of the whole  
*Christian* Dispensation; viz. the Redemp-  
tion by the Son of God incarnate. For is  
it not a most wonderful, and glorious Ma-  
nifestation of God's tender Love, and Pi-  
ty to the sinful Race of Men; that he  
should send his own Son, *the Likeness of*  
*his Glory*, and *the express Image of his Per-*  
*son*, *in the Likeness of sinful Flesh*, to suf-  
fer for Sin, *the Just for the Unjust*; and  
thereby propitiate God's Anger, and re-  
store Sinners to Favour, and Mercy? And  
is it not at the same Time the greatest  
Demonstration of God's just Indignation,  
and exceeding Hatred against Sin, that  
the Atonement of it, should cost no less  
a Price, *than the Blood of the Son of God*?  
And can any Thing have so direct a Ten-  
dency, or so powerful an Operation to  
raise and inflame our Love towards God,  
on

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SERMON. on the one Hand; and to beget in our Souls

VI. an utter Detestation of Sin, on the other; as the Contemplation of this very Mystery? And as they who thro' their Disbelief of this Mystery debase the Son of God into a Creature, (how excellent soever) do thereby infinitely depreciate God's wonderful Love to Mankind, and represent Sin as exceedingly less offensive to him than it is; so do they by the very same Means extinguish the noblest Incentive to the Love of God, which is the true Spring of all ingenuous Obedience; and take away the most quickening Motive of all others to the Abhorrence, and Avoidance of Sin: That is, its infinite Odiousness in the Sight of God, our Redeemer, and our Judge.

LET not then the Exploders of *Mysteries*, value themselves upon their Morals, when 'tis so apparent from this single Instance, that they deprive themselves of some of the chief Aids, and Encouragements to Virtue, and the best Supports to their own Infirmities.

NOR will that thin Subterfuge cover them from Blame, that in embracing the moral Part of the *Gospel*, they attend to the

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the main Thing necessary; since the great SERM.  
Mystery of our Redemption in *Christ*, is VI.  
of such evident Necessity, and Use towards  
the Advancement of true Piety, and Virtue. ~~~~~

BESIDES, as has been before observed;  
they who submit to the Authority of the  
*Gospel* in one Case, and refuse to yield to  
it in another, are left without Excuse; be-  
cause the whole stands upon the same Foot  
of Evidence. And if two Things are  
made necessary in the same *Gospel*; they  
who shall presume to say, that one of the  
two is unnecessary; do as much as in them  
lies, to evacuate the Law of God, by draw-  
ing his Commandments into Competition;  
boldly deciding, that the *one must be done,*  
*and the other may be left undone*; when yet  
both are enjoin'd by the same Authority,  
and ought to be equally regarded, and o-  
bey'd. Now it is too plain to be denied,  
that the *Gospel* makes two Sorts of Things  
necessary to Salvation: There are Things  
necessary to be done, and Things necessary  
to be believed: There are Things, which  
in his Judgment (who shall finally be  
Judge of Quick, and Dead) *be that be-*  
*lieveth shall be saved, and he that believ-*  
*eth*



SERM. *eth not shall be damned.* The wilful Dis-

VI. belief therefore of such Things, (and such  
 is the Mystery of our Redemption, with  
 all its main Dependents) is without *Per-*  
*adventure* a damnable Sin, and it must be  
 an unpardonable Presumption to think o-  
 therwise. Rash and presumptuous, and  
 unwarrantable too, is that crude Saying,  
 too frequent in the Mouths of some wa-  
 yering *Christians*; that no *Heresy* is so bad  
 as a wicked Life! What Need, what Room  
 for any Comparison between the two, when  
 both are so bad, as without Repentance  
 to be destructive of Salvation? And what  
 can be worse than that? For *St. Paul* (we  
 know) ranks *Heresies* with some of the  
 most flagrant Sins that are; and concludes  
 it under the same Sentence of Condemna-  
 tion. *Now the Works of the Flesh are ma-*  
*nifest, which are these, Adultery, Fornica-*  
*tion, Uncleaness, Lasciviousness, Idolatry,*  
*Witchcraft, Hatred, Variance, Emulations,*  
*Wrath, Strife, Seditions, Heresies, Envy-*  
*ings, Murders, Drunkenness, Revellings,*  
*and such like, of the which I tell you before,*  
*as I have also told you in Time past, that*  
*they which do such Things shall not inherit the*  
*Kingdom*

Gal. v. 19,  
 20, 21.

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Kingdom of God. Where it is remarkable SERM.  
that *Heresies* are not only reckoned amongst VI.  
the greatest Immoralities, but are made e-  
qually the Works of the Flesh, *i. e.* the  
Effect of inordinate Lust, or vitious Ha-  
bit, and are equally excluded from the  
Kingdom of Heaven.

AND 'tis as remarkable, that as *Heresies*  
are numbred with other notorious Vices,  
so *Heretics* (if ye look over the Memoirs of  
such Men from the Beginning, to this Day)  
have always been found very irregular,  
and immoral in their Practice. Not per-  
haps in such Instances, as are most scan-  
dalous in the Eye of the World, and most  
liable to the Lash of the Law; but in o-  
ther Instances, that are no less contrary to  
good Manners, and stand condemned with  
equal Reason, and Authority. They have  
not so often perhaps been Drunkards, and  
Revellers, Adulterers, and Murderers: For  
such Enormities would soon have blasted  
the Credit of a growing Sect, and defeat-  
ed their main Design.

THEY have affected therefore for the  
most Part to put on the Appearance at least  
of more Sanctity, and Devotion, more re-  
ligious

SERM. Religious Austerity, and a stricter Morality  
 VI. than other Men: But with all their Dis-  
 guises, they have never been able to con-  
 ceal, that they were envious, wrathful,  
 contentious, proud, ambitious, presump-  
 tuous, Despisers of other Men, of their  
 Betters in Point of Learning, of their Su-  
 periors in Place, and Station, and of all  
 Government, and all Authority indeed,  
 that of St. Paul not excepted.

*Now to God the Father, &c.*



SERMON





# S E R M O N VII.

Of the swift Progress of the Gospel.

\*\*\*\*\*

ACTS xix. 20.

*So mightily grew the Word of God,  
and prevailed.*



WE read in the Book of *Exodus*, when God laid his Commands upon *Moses* to go in his Name, and demand the Release of the *Israelites* from the *Egyptian* Oppressor, that he was full of his Exceptions, and by no means  
apt

SERM.  
VII.

Chap. iii.

SERM. apt to persuade himself, that he had Authority, Credit, or Eloquence enough to manage so nice, and unwelcome an Embassy, and to a Prince so haughty, and tyrannical; and therefore to this Purpose he puts his Scruples one after another; *Who am I* (says he at first, Ver. 11.) *that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the Children of Israel?* And again, *But behold they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my Voice; for they will say, The Lord hath not appear'd unto thee.* And a third Time, *O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy Servant, but I am slow of Speech, and of a slow Tongue.*

Chap. iv.  
1.

3 10.

To cure him therefore of this unseasonable Diffidence, and to inspire him with Resolution suitable to such an Undertaking, God thought fit to promise him his own special Direction, and Assistance, to be with his Mouth, and to teach him what he should say, and to arm him moreover with the Power of Miracles, to confirm the Truth of his Commission. And if *Moses* his Commission did require such an extraordinary Confirmation, and Enforcement,

ment, much more must that of our Sa-  
*viour Christ* to his *Apostles*, recorded, S E R M. VII.  
*Mat. xxviii. 19. Go ye and teach all Na-*  
*tions, baptizing them in the Name of the*  
*Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost,*  
 or as *St. Mark* reports it, *Go ye into all the* Chap. xvi.  
*World, and preach the Gospel to every Crea-*  
*ture.* 25.

A Commission so noble in its De-  
 sign, so large in its Extent, so difficult in  
 its Execution; that nothing less than a  
 Power eminently divine, could enable them  
 to go through with it. For had the *A-*  
*postles* been left to their own Qualifications  
 alone, without any other Furniture, than  
 what Nature, Education or Experience  
 had supplied them with, they might have  
 been allow'd to plead in their own Excuse;  
 Lord, who are we, that we should be sent  
 to profelyte all Nations? How should e-  
 leven Men of us, low, contemptible, de-  
 stitute as we are, be able to compass, and  
 convert the whole World? We are not  
 furnished with Learning, or Languages, or  
 Reasoning, or Rhetoric sufficient to con-  
 vince the learned *Rabbis*, and subtle *Phi-*  
*losophers*; much less are we prepar'd, to  
 make Head against the combin'd Spite, and



SERM. Rage of Jew, and Heathen, or to bear up  
 VII. against the sanguinary Laws, and armed  
 Force of Tyrants, and Persecutors.

Mat.

xxviii. 18.

BUT that there might be no Room for such Doubts on the *Apostle's* Part, and no Reason for others to disbelieve them, *Christ* thought fit in the first Place to declare the Plenitude of his own Power: *All Power* (says he) *is given unto me in Heaven, and in Earth*; of which they had already seen a very signal Instance in his Resurrection from the Dead. Having declared this, he delegates his Authority to them, *to go and disciple all Nations*; and to animate them with Zeal, and Courage to undertake, and execute this weighty Trust, he promises to be perpetually present with them, and assisting to them, by the Energy, and Virtue of his Holy Spirit; to send the Promise of the Father upon them, even the Spirit of Truth, to lead them into all Truth, to give them a Mouth, and Wisdom which all their Adversaries should not be able to gainsay, nor resist; to bear authentic Testimony to their Doctrine, by supernatural Works, and Wonders; and in a Word, to endue them *with Power from on high*,  
 every

every Way equal to the Difficulty of their S E R M.  
Charge and Care. VII.

AND now all Distrust, and Fear was  
vanish'd on the sudden. They who were  
ere while so timorous, so doubtful, so ve-  
ry slow of Heart to believe, we find now  
returning to *Jerusalem* with great Joy, as  
the Lord had commanded, big with the  
Expectation of this glorious Promise, and  
entirely relying on his Truth, and Power  
to fulfil it. Which within a few Days  
they heard, and saw, and felt in a most  
remarkable Manner: *For suddenly there* Acts ii.  
*came a sound from Heaven, as of a rushing* 2, 3, 4.  
*mighty Wind, and it filled all the House*  
*where they were sitting: And there ap-*  
*pear'd unto them cloven Tongues, like as of*  
*Fire, and it sat upon each of them, and*  
*they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and*  
*began to speak with other Tongues, as the*  
*Spirit gave them Utterance.*

AND from henceforward being sensible,  
that their own natural Defects were abun-  
dantly supplied by the supernatural Aids  
of the Holy Spirit, *They went forth and* Mark xvi.  
*preach'd every where, the Lord working* 20.  
*with them, and confirming the Word, with*

SERM *Signs following*; and among other Signs,  
 VII. that undaunted Presence of Mind, and  
 ~~~~~ Boldness of Speech, that invincible Forti-  
 tude and Patience, with which they spoke,
 and acted, and suffer'd in the Cause of
Christ, was none of the least miraculous.

AND the Work of God prosper'd ac-
 cordingly in their Hands, and the Success
 they had in it was equally prodigious,
 with the Means they made use of. The
 Seed sown took rooting apace, it fastned
 itself deep, and spread itself wide, and
 multiplied, and brought forth Fruit ex-
 ceedingly. No Tares of *Herefy*, nor Thorns
 of Self-love, or secular Care could choak
 it; no Heat of Persecution could scorch or
 blast it, not all the envious Art, or brutal
 Force of Men, or even of the infernal
 Powers could destroy it; *so mightily* (as
 the Text informs us) *grew the Word of*
God, and prevailed. So mightily indeed,
 that it was plainly above humane Strength,
 the Increase was certainly of God. So
 that the very Propagation of the *Gospel*
 itself, if duly weigh'd, and consider'd, is
 one of the most pregnant Arguments in
 the World to evince its Truth, and Divi-
 nity.

nity. And that you may have the Satis-
faction to see that it is really so, you shall
give me leave to look a little more narrowly
into the Text, and enquire,

SERM.
VII.
~~~~~

I. *First*, INTO the Fact itself, what the Growth of the *Gospel* was, and how much it prevail'd, upon its first Planting by the *Apostles*.

II. *Secondly*, How many, and great the Difficulties were, over which it did prevail; from both which compar'd together, it will be easy to collect;

III. *Thirdly*, WHAT that superior Power was, by which it was thus wonderfully maintained, and propagated.

I. *First*, I AM to enquire into the Text itself, what the Growth of the *Gospel* was, and how much it prevailed upon its first Planting by the *Apostles*.

AND though the History of the *Acts* gives no Account of the Travails, and the Labours of any of the *Apostles*, besides St. *Peter*, and St. *Paul*, with two or three of their fellow *Labourers*, and of theirs not a perfect Account neither; since 'tis well

SERM. known, they both liv'd above twenty Years  
 VII. after the Thread of this *History* breaks off;  
 I say this notwithstanding, we have ample  
 Information, even from this *Epitome*, of  
 the swift Progress, and amazing Success of  
 the *Gospel*, under the Cultivation, and Care  
 of these two *Apostles*.

FOR the Gift of Tongues was no sooner  
 bestow'd, but it was employ'd to very ex-  
 cellent Purpose; and by one single Sermon  
 of St. *Peter's*, there was an immediate Ac-  
 cession of Three Thousand Souls to the  
 Church, and presently after Five Thou-  
 sand more were added to these. And we  
 read, *that the Word of God increased, and*  
*the Number of the Disciples multiplied*  
*greatly in Jerusalem; and a great Company*  
*of the Priests were obedient to the Faith.*  
 And again we find, *that the Churches through-*  
*out all Judea, and Galilee, and Sama-*  
*ria were edified, and multiplied.* At *An-*  
*tioch* we are told, *that many of the Jews,*  
*and religious Profelytes follow'd Paul, and*  
*Barnabas; and at Iconium they so spake,*  
*that a great Multitude, both of the Jews,*  
*and also of the Greeks believ'd.* At *Corinth*  
 we hear that *Crispus the chief Ruler of the*  
*Synagogue,*

*Synagogue, believ'd in the Lord with all his* SERM.  
*House; and many of the Corinthians besides.* VII.

*And at Jerusalem St. Paul declar'd particu-* Chap. xviii. 8.  
*larly, what Things God had done among the* Chap. xxi. 19.  
*Gentiles by his Ministry; a certain Sign*

*that it had been remarkably successful in*  
*their Conversion; and the Elders there re-*  
*turn'd him a full equivalent for his wel-*  
*come News, Thou seest, Brother, how many* Chap. xxi. 20.  
*Thousands of Jews there are which be-*  
*lieve.*

AND doubtless, if it be true (what seems to be with good Reason suppos'd) that the *Apostles* spent their first twelve Years at *Jerusalem*, they must make a mighty Harvest on it all that Time; and in all Probability their Ministry was attended with equal Success, when they went abroad among the Dispersions; as the Epistles of *St. James*, *St. Peter*, and *St. John*, and that of *St. Paul* to the *Hebrews*, in Part may testify.

AND there is no Reason to make it a Question, but when they turn'd to the *Gentiles*, they were still as happy in their Endeavours, For there was a vast Concourse of this Sort at *Jerusalem*; devout Acts ii. 5  
*Men*

Q 4



SERM. *Men of every Nation under Heaven, i. e.*

VII. *Profelytes*, that fear'd, and worship'd the true God, but submitted not to the Law of *Moses*; and therefore as being free from that Prepossession, which was too apt to blind the *Jews*; they were of all Men the best dispos'd to embrace the Faith of *Christ*, and the fittest to recommend it to those *Gentiles*, that were less knowing than themselves.

So that all these Circumstances laid together, we may justly conclude, in Proportion to what we find related in the short *Acts* we have of *St. Peter*, and *St. Paul*; that the Labours of all the rest of the *Apostles* had their desir'd Effect, and consequently the Numbers of the Converts, that they made, must needs be prodigiously great.

AND this we may learn from the very Confession of their Enemies, and Persecutors: For *Pliny* within three or four Years after the Death of *St. John*, owns it to the Emperor *Trajan*, " That he was shock'd  
 " at the numerous Appearance of *Christians*,  
 " Persons of both Sexes, and all Ages, and  
 " Conditions, that were ready to hazard  
 " their

“ their utmost, for the Sake of their Re-  
 “ ligion. SERM. VII.

AND *Tertullian* one of the antient *Apo-*  
*logists*, within a hundred Years after, scru-  
 ples not to make it his public Boast, that  
 they were nigh a Majority in every City.  
 Nay, he carries it yet higher, and tells the  
*Heathens* to their Faces, “ That this Up-  
 “ *start*, despised *Sect*, had fill’d their Cities,  
 “ and their Provinces, their Councils, and  
 “ their Camps, the Palace, and the Se-  
 “ nate-house, and what not? And that  
 “ their Multitudes were such, that should  
 “ they have withdrawn themselves into  
 “ some Remote Part of the World, the  
 “ *Empire* would in a Manner have been  
 “ exhausted, and left all in dismal Soli-  
 “ tude, and Silence.

AND let it suffice thus far to have en-  
 quir’d into the Fact itself, what the Growth,  
 and Progress of the *Gospel* was under the  
 Ministry of the *Apostles*, which must be al-  
 low’d to be marvellously great, if we con-  
 sider in how short a Time, and with how  
 swift a Course, it shot like Lightning from  
*East* to *West*, adding Conquest to Con-  
 quest, and making *Profelytes* of all Nations.

But

SERM. But the Wonder will still improve upon  
 VII. our Hands if we proceed,

II. To the *Second Enquiry*, viz. how many and great the Difficulties were, over which it did prevail.

If indeed, *Christianity* had been only a pleasing Novelty, or a pretty refining upon *Judaism*, or *Gentilism*, or a disguis'd Mixture of both; if it had been dress'd up plausibly with Art, suited to Mens Palates, and fram'd for their Interests, or easily to be reconcil'd with the prevailing Customs of the World, and the vicious Inclinations of Mankind: Had it been such a Contrivance, I say, it might (without a Prodigy) like other fortunate *Impostures*, have obtain'd a Fooming, and either by Craft, or Force perhaps render'd itself somewhat considerable.

BUT this was far from being the Case; for *Christianity* was an Enemy to the World, and therefore the World was an Enemy to *Christianity*, and industriously retarded its Progress, by all the Obstacles that Prejudice, Vice, Interest, and Power could clog up its Way with. And all these Obstacles were



were to be remov'd, e're it could have its **SERMON**  
 free Course: But by whom, or how? **VII.**  
 ven by the most unlikely Instruments, and  
 the most unpromising Method, that could  
 be thought of; by no other than a Parcel  
 of *illiterate*; and *contemptible Mechanics*:  
 without any Subtlety of Arguing, or  
 Slight of Persuasion, or secular Aid, (of  
 which alas they were wholly destitute) but  
 in Opposition to all these, by the naked  
 Force, and Lustre of Truth, and by the  
 Simplicity of Preaching; nay, by preach-  
 ing up the Virtue of a crucified Sa-  
 viour, which was already Matter of  
 Scandal, and Derision; to the Jews a <sup>1 Cor. i.</sup>  
*Stumbling-block*; and to the Greeks <sup>23.</sup> *Foolish-*  
*ness*.

AND if *Christianity* against all this strong  
 Combination surviv'd, as it did, and flou-  
 rish'd, and became in a short Space of  
 Time, as *Porphyry* unwillingly call'd it,  
*ἡ κρείττω διδασκῆ*, this is a Thing really to  
 be admir'd at, and let it be of whose do-  
 ing it will, it is, and must be *marvellous*  
*in our Eyes*.

AND since Admiration leads the Way  
 oftentimes to Knowledge, it may be use-  
 ful

SERM. ful perhaps to enter into Particulars, and  
 VII. take a nearer View of those Obstacles,  
 which stood in the Way of the *Gospel*, at  
 its first Publication; but were not able to  
 obstruct its Passage. And

THE *First* Obstacle was from Prejudice,  
 that is always an Opposer of Truth, but  
 never more unreasonably, and violently so,  
 than when 'tis riveted by Education, and  
 strengthened by Prescription, and counte-  
 nanc'd by great Authorities, which was un-  
 happily the Case, both of *Jew* and *Gen-  
 tile*, at that Time.

THE *Jews* for their Part were extremely  
 zealous of their Law, which was confes-  
 sedly of divine Institution; and as fond of  
 their Traditions, which were impos'd on  
 them under the Name of venerable Anti-  
 quity: But above all Things they were de-  
 lighted with the vain Expectation of a  
 temporal *Messiah*, who was to appear, as  
 they imagin'd, in great Power, and Splen-  
 dour. And therefore to hear their Cere-  
 monies, and Traditions slighted, by a Per-  
 son of so mean, and despicable a Figure,  
 as *Jesus* was; to hear their own *Law*, and  
 their *Prophets* accommodated, to prove,  
 that

that even he was the very *Christ* that they S E R M.  
expected; this was a Doctrine so opposite VII.  
to their prejudicate Notions, that it must  
needs be very difficult to be swallow'd; especially since it could not be embrac'd, without owning themselves in Effect to be the Murderers of their *Saviour*, and *Blasphemers* against the *Holy Ghost*.

AND the *Gentiles* labour'd under much the same Prepossessions; for the Profession of Religion, that they had been brought up in, was *Polytheism*: And for this they thought, they had the specious Plea of Antiquity, and Universality, and moreover the Favour of the Gods, whom they worshipp'd. And for them to be told after all, that amidst their Multiplicity, they were still ignorant of the true God, that he *dwelleth not in Temples made with Hands; that no Man hath seen him at any Time, but the only begotten Son which is in the Bosom of the Father, he hath declar'd him;* and that *Jesus*, the crucified *Jesus*, is his only Son, *the very Brightness of his Glory, and the express Image of his Person;* I say, for them to be told such strange *Stories*, must needs create a very strong  
4 Aversion



SERM. Aversion to *Christianity*; especially, since  
 VII. they could not entertain the Belief of it  
 without condemning themselves, and their  
 Forefathers, of stupid Ignorance, and gross  
 Idolatry.

AND yet in Spight of Prejudice, the Do-  
 ctrine of *Christ* did triumphantly prevail  
 over many, that were the most zealous,  
 and learned *Professors* among the *Jews*, and  
 the most inquisitive *Philosophers* among the  
*Heathens*. Such for Instance was St. *Paul*,  
 himself once a Persecuter; and *Apollon* a  
 Man mighty, and eloquent among the for-  
 mer; and of the latter Kind, was *Diony-  
 sius* the *Areopagite*; and in after Times,  
*Justin Martyr*, *Athenagoras*, *Tertullian*,  
 and others. But

Secondly, ANOTHER great Obstacle that  
 oppos'd itself to the *Gospel* of *Christ*, was  
 the Prevalency of Vice, which being the  
 first Occupier of Mens Hearts, made them  
 averse to the sacred Truth. For as Men  
 are naturally apt to be too indulgent to  
 their Lusts, and too passionately fond of  
 sensual Satisfactions and worldly Pleasures;  
 so the *Gospel* was like to be no palatable  
 Doctrine, no welcome Proposal to such  
 distemper'd

distemper'd Souls. A Doctrine that taught SERM.  
Men to *deny all Ungodliness, and worldly* VII.  
*Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and*  
*godly in this present World.* A Doctrine  
that requir'd them to curb their most  
craving Appetites, to renounce their dar-  
ling Inclinations, to deny themselves the  
most desirable Enjoyments; and if the  
Providence of God should call them to it,  
to submit to the extremest Hardships, and  
Sufferings; and all upon a distant Prospect  
of a future Reward. Hard Sayings these  
no Doubt, to the Worldling and Sensualist;  
and yet the *Gospel* triumph'd still, and  
wrought wonderful Changes in this Kind  
of Men; and this is an Observation that  
the Antients are very full of. *Origen* in  
particular, takes Notice that the Converts  
to *Christianity* were transform'd into new  
Men, and restor'd from the very Sink of  
all Corruption and Impurity, to the Pra-  
ctice of Sobriety, and Continence, and a  
grave, and regular Behaviour.

AND *Lactantius* to magnify the Power  
of God's Word, makes the Challenge to all  
that had a Mind to try the Experiment,  
to see if the Effect would not answer. And

we

SERM. we meet with frequent Accounts of some  
 VII. of tenderest Age, and Sex, that have en-  
 dur'd the Extremity and Torture, for the  
 Name of *Christ*, even *not accepting a De-*  
*liverance.*

Heb. xi.  
 35.

*Thirdly*, ANOTHER Obstacle that stood in the Way of the *Gospel*, at its first Entrance into the World, was Interest, the great *Diana*, that all the World is too prone to worship. And to be sure, where any Religion, be it *Judaism*, or *Paganism*, is the stablish'd Religion of a Countrey, it must carry its secular Advantages along with it, and engage a great many in Point of Interest to adhere to it, against all Opposers. And when Gain is, as it were, an Appurtenance of Religion, it must needs be a very difficult Task to persuade Men to renounce their Faith, and the precious Fruits of it at once. Such an Attempt will be sure to be *withstood* with all the angry Zeal imaginable, by every *Demetrius*, and the whole Company of such devout Craftsmen. And yet the *Christian* Religion, though it propos'd no less than the utter Abolition, both of the *Jewish*, and the *Pagan* Worship, surmounted this



this great Difficulty, and induced great SERM.  
Numbers of Men of both those Professions VII.

to quit, together with their hereditary Religion, their nearest Dependences, and their dearest Interests. For we read in the very Infancy of the Church, that *all those that believ'd* (which were then about three thousand Souls) *had all Things in Common*, Acts ii.  
*and sold their Possessions and Goods, and* 44. 45.  
*parted them to all Men, as every Man had need.* And though such were the Exigencies of those Times, that Christianity could not have subsisted without this charitable Provision; yet we find that Multitudes embrac'd it notwithstanding; and were well contented to submit to the Condition,

even to *sell what they had, and lay the* Acts iv.  
*Price at the Apostles Feet.* Nay, we find 35.

that a great Company of the Priests, those that were Partakers with the Altar, and liv'd of the Sacrifice, were early Converts to the Faith. And we are told, *that many of them which used curious Arts brought* Acts xix.  
*their Books together, and burned them before* 19.  
*all Men.* And they counted the Price of

them, and found it fifty thousand Pieces of Silver. So mightily (as the Text with some

SERM. Mark of Admiration adds) *grew the Word*  
 VII. *of God, and prevailed*; even over potent Interest. And *Ecclesiastical History* informs us of many Persons of Note, and Eminence; who, in After-times chearfully parted will all their Honours, Preferments, and Advantages to take up a Religion that oblig'd them to *be poor in Spirit*.

*Fourthly*, ANOTHER grand Obstacle to the Progress of the *Gospel* was Power. The Power, that is of the civil Sword, whetted by Zeal and Bigotry, and wielded by Rage and Cruelty. And this produc'd such a violent Shower of Blood (when *Christianity* was yet but an Infant Plant) as was enough in all humane Probability to tear it up by its tender Roots, and drown it in Destruction. But it fell out quite contrary: For after the Martyrdom of St. *Stephen*, when Persecution began to rage at *Jerusalem*, and *Saul* was making *Havock in the Church*: This was so far from hindring the Propagation of the *Christian Faith*, that it providentially help'd it forwards; for upon this Occasion we are inform'd, that *they that were scatter'd abroad, went every where preaching the Word*.

Acts viii.

+

And

And when *Herod* murder'd *James*, and im-  
prison'd *John*, and began to play his wick-  
ed Pranks; the next *News* we hear of him

is, that *he was eaten of Worms*, and gave  
up the Ghost; but the Word of God grew,  
and multiplied. And when the *Heathen*

S E R M.  
VII  
Acts xii.  
21, 22.

*Emperors*, levell'd their murdering *Edicts*  
against the Lives of the poor *Christians*,  
and one Persecution follow'd upon the  
Neck of another; this cruel Effusion of  
Blood, was but as a timely Watering to  
God's Church, that made it still more  
flourishing, and fruitful. And 'tis amazing  
to consider, with what Earnestness they  
courted Martyrdom, and with what Ala-  
cridy, and Constancy they underwent it;  
aged Fathers forgot the Infirmary of their  
Years, and delicate Matrons, and tender  
Virgins the Softness of their Sex, and Con-  
stitution, and submitted to the Fury of the  
Tormentors, as patiently in a Manner, as  
the Anvil does to the Hammer, which  
will sooner weary the strongest Arm, than  
yield to the hardest Blow. And so per-  
fectly victorious was this Faith over all  
worldly Powers, and temporal Considera-  
tions, that even the Executioners them-



SERM. selves in doing their Office, were some-  
 VII. times made immediate Converts, and ready to become the next Sufferers. These, and such as these, were the Difficulties, which *Christianity* had to grapple with, in its Infant-State; and which it openly triumph'd over.

AND who were the Men, under whose Care, and Conduct all these mighty Things were accomplish'd? Who were they that preach'd the *Gospel* so persuasively and powerfully, so successfully under all these Disadvantages, and against all this combin'd Opposition? A Stranger to the *History* would imagine no less, than that they were Men of a superior Genius, great Masters of Learning, well skill'd, and practis'd in the Laws of Dispute, and all the Arts of *Rhetorical* Persuasion, and Insinuation. In a Word, cunning Managers, and dexterous Shifters, that knew how to improve all Advantages, and to make the best of every Disappointment; and that so by Degrees they weather'd the Point, and gain'd *Christianity* a peaceable Possession in the World.

BUT

BUT no such Matter, they were plain, S E R M.  
honest Men, brought up to mean Employ- VII.  
ments, not polish'd with Letters, nor  
vers'd in Politics, nor buoy'd up with any  
Interest, nor help'd out with any Art. No!  
all these Advantages were thrown into the  
opposite Scale; and yet the Weight, and  
Moment of the Truths they deliver'd, and  
the peculiar, and powerful Demonstration  
with which they were taught, immediately  
turn'd the Balance; and *so mightily grew*  
*the Word of God, and prevail'd*; that it  
could not be check'd, or resisted, but in-  
deed every vain Attempt of retarding it,  
prov'd a wonderful Furtherance to it.  
And even taking Things in this View, be-  
fore we proceed to consider how the  
Word was confirm'd by Signs following;  
verily, this itself is a Sign of the invinci-  
ble Power of divine Truth, that in its na-  
tive Simplicity, it should prevail over Na-  
ture, Art, and Force, all combin'd toge-  
ther against it.

A MOST illustrious Testimony this, to  
the Mission, and Doctrine of *Christ*; such  
as, if other Miracles had been wanting,  
could have pass'd for no less than miracu-

SERM. lous. And since the *Christian Religion* is  
 VII. so well founded in Truth, and supported by  
 ~~~~~ such convincing, and such astonishing E-  
 vidence; surely they, who can find in their
 Hearts at this Time of Day, to disbelieve it,
 or to entertain the least Doubt of it; must
 be more obstinate than the *Jews* of Old, more
 stupid than the very *Heathens*, who blind-
 ed, as they were, by Lust, and Prejudice,
 could not long resist the dazzling Light of it.
 And as for us, who think, and have Rea-
 son to think ourselves well establish'd in
 the Belief of our holy Religion, happy
 were it for us, if we were equally con-
 firm'd in the habitual Practice of it; we,
 that know the Things, happy were it for
 us, if we were equally dispos'd to do them.
 Then would the Word of God increase, and
 multiply in our Hearts, and bring forth
 Fruit unto Life everlasting. Then, as
 sure as the Things we believe are true, so
 sure should we be, of *attaining the End of*
 Pet. i. 9. *our Faith, even the Salvation of our Souls,*
 Which God grant, &c.



S E R M O N



S E R M O N V I I I .

Of the swift Progress of the Gospel.



ACTS xix. 20.

*So mightily grew the Word of God,
and prevailed.*



Y the *Word* of God, 'tis ob- S E R M.
vious, we are here to un- V I I I .
derstand the *Gospel* preach'd, ~~~~~
and propagated, as the Text
intimates, with mighty Suc-
cess, by the *Apostles* of our *Lord Jesus*
Christ.

R 4

Which

S E R M.
VIII.

WHICH being a Thing in all its Circumstances so very wonderful, and in its true Construction, and Use, so strong a Confirmation to our *Christian* Faith; I thought it might not be improper, and I hop'd it would not be unsatisfactory, if I should set it before you in a full Light; and to this End I propos'd,

I. *First*, To enquire into the Fact itself, what the Growth of the *Gospel* was, and how much it prevail'd upon its first Planting by the *Apostles*.

II. *Secondly*, How many, and great the Difficulties were, over which it did prevail. And

III. *Thirdly*, WHAT that superior Power was, by which it thus encreas'd, and flourish'd, and became so mightily, so wonderfully prevalent in the World.

I. As to the *First* Enquiry, it has already appear'd, that the *Gospel* upon its first Planting, took rooting apace, and grew prodigiously, and multiplied by the Accession of three thousand Souls at one Sermon; and soon after, of five thousand more,

more, and so on in vast Proportions, SERM.
 wherever the *Apostles* came, both among VIII.
Jews and Gentiles. This is plainly to be
 seen in the *Acts* of St. *Peter*, and St. *Paul*,
 and their Fellow-labourers, which stand
 recorded in holy Writ. And it may justly
 be presum'd, that the Care and Pains of
 the other *Apostles*, were blest with equal
 Success. And this is sufficiently confirm'd,
 both by the Confession of *Heathen* Wri-
 ters, and the Boasts of the *Christian Apo-*
logists; the first of which we find com-
 plaining, and that very early, of the spread-
 ing Contagion of the *Christian* Sect, and
 the great Numbers of those, that resolutely
 adher'd to it; whilst the latter rejoice,
 and glory as much in its Prosperity, and
 Increase; and even vie (as *Tertullian* at
 least did in his Time) for the Majority in
 almost every City.

II. As to the *Second* Enquiry, it has also
 appear'd, that the Difficulties which *Chri-*
stianity had to grapple with, even in its
 Infant-state, were exceeding many, and
 great; no less than a Combination of all
 the inveterate Prejudices of *Jews*, and
Heathens,

SERM. *Heathens*, all the darling Lusts, and Vices
 VIII. of a degenerate World, all the Baits, and
 ~~~~~ Allurements of temporal Interest; and all  
 the Force, and Fury of the secular Powers, and all the Malice, and Machinations of Men, and Devils. All these were to be encounter'd by a few plain, simple Men, without the Advantage of Learning or Education, without the Arts of Policy, or Address, without the Supports of Wealth, or Power. And these very Men unprovided, unarm'd as they were, and unable as they seem'd to be, vanquish'd all this sturdy Opposition; preach'd the *Gospel* victoriously, made their Enemies their Converts, Captives to *Christ*, and Martyrs for him. Of all which we have ample Information, from sacred, and *Ecclesiastical* Story.

AND indeed, the Success, and Progress of the *Gospel*, was so prodigious and amazing; that the very Admiration which it raises, would naturally put us upon that Enquiry, which I have reserv'd for the Subject of this Discourse, *viz.*

III. *Thirdly,*

III. *Thirdly*, WHAT that superior Power was, by which the *Gospel* became so mightily, so wonderfully prevalent in the World.

THIS is an Enquiry, I say, the Wonderfulness of the Thing would naturally lead us to, if we were Strangers to the History. And, as we are *Christians*, the true Resolution of it, will afford us equal Satisfaction, and Profit.

THE Question then being this, by what Power the *Gospel* did at first prevail: It must have been either by some Power that was humane, or by such as was diabolical, or by such as was truly, and eminently divine. And, if upon Examination it shall appear, that it could not be by the first, nor yet by the second, then the Conclusion will abide firm, that by the third it must be, even by a Power incontestably divine. To proceed then, I shall prove,

*First*, THAT it could not be by any Power that was merely humane; because it was by Means quite out of Man's Ability, and in a Method quite contrary to the Course of humane Affairs; and yet the Cause prosper'd nevertheless, but indeed

SERM. deed so much abundantly the more against  
 VIII. all Probability, and in Spite of all Opposition.

HUMANLY Speaking, the learnedest Advocate, and the subtlest Arguer will get the better of his Adversaries; the plausiblest Speaker will win most upon his Hearers, the cunningest Manager that lures Men by their Inclinations, and draws them in by the Hook of Interest, will gain over most to his Party, especially if he has it in his Power to back his Persuasion, if it should prove too weak, with the strong Argument of Compulsion.

BUT the *Apostles* of *Jesus Christ* were a quite differet Sort of Men, and took other Kind of Measures, in preaching the *Gospel*, and converting Unbelievers.

As for Learning, they had little or none among them, except what fell to *St. Paul's* Share; and that he disclaim'd too, and neglected, when once he was called to be an *Apostle*, for then *he determin'd* (as he tells us himself) to *know nothing* (as thinking nothing worth knowing) *save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*

1 Cor. ii.  
2.

AND



AND this strange Doctrine, so unplau-  
sible in itself, he and his brethren taught  
in the most plain, artless Manner, and in-  
deed to all Apperance, the most disadvan-  
tageous, and the least likely to succeed of  
any that could be thought of.

THEY judg'd that it would depreciate the  
*Gospel*, and weaken its Authority to use  
the *enticing Words of Men's Wisdom*, in its  
Defence, to prove it artificially by the  
Rules of Logick, or set it forth ornamen-  
tally in Strains of Rhetoric. All this there-  
fore they industriously avoided, and con-  
tented themselves to relate the naked Mat-  
ter of Fact, that the crucified *Jesus* was,  
according to what he had himself fore-  
told, risen from the Dead, and ascended  
into Heaven, and having receiv'd of the  
Father the Promise of the Holy Ghost,  
had shed it forth upon them, and there-  
by enabled them all on a Sudden, with-  
out the Help of a Teacher, without any  
Study, or Premeditation of their own, to  
speak all Languages, (which is more than  
the perfectest *Linguist* could attain to, by  
the most assiduous, and laborious Appli-  
cation) and to work Signs, and Wonders by  
the

SERM the Name of *Jesus*; to chase away De-  
 VIII. vils at the Sound of it; to cure Diseases at  
 a Distance, by the healing Influence of a  
 Shadow in Passing, or the salutary Virtue  
 of Aprons, and Handkerchiefs, sent to  
 those that were sick. Strange Secrets these,  
 that all the learned Sons of *Æsculapius*, or  
 the *Adepti* in *occult Philosophy* could never  
 yet pretend to be Masters of: And there-  
 fore sure the Power must be more than  
 humane, by which these Things were ef-  
 fected.

AND the Truth of these Facts, those I  
 mean, which they reported of the *Lord*  
*Jesus*, they averr'd upon their own Know-  
 ledge, and with the utmost Assurance;  
 and for the astonishing Effects that were  
 wrought upon, or by themselves, they ap-  
 peal'd to the Eyes, and Ears of Multitudes  
 of their Enemies, in whose Presence they  
 were done. And the Doctrine that they  
 rais'd upon this Foundation, was directly  
 Acts ii. 36. this; that the same *Jesus* whom the *Jews*  
*had crucified, was both Lord, and Christ:*  
*And the only Name under Heaven among*  
*Men, whereby they might be saved.* And  
 Acts ii. 38. therefore *that they ought to repent, and be*  
*baptiz'd*

baptiz'd every one in his Name for the Re-  
mission of their Sins. S E R M.  
VIII.

AND yet to induce Men to believe in him, they did not think fit to conceal that he was despis'd, and rejected, whilst he liv'd, and died a most ignominious Death; so far were they from endeavouring to conceal it, that they proclaim'd it aloud, as if it had been the chief Recommendation of him, and his Doctrine; and attributed that Salvation, of which they brought the Tidings, solely to the Blood of his Cross.

THIS they knew would be Matter of Scandal to the Jews, and of Scorn to the Greeks; and yet they still insisted on it, and pressed it upon their Belief, without any Kind of softning Introduction, or Insinuation; and indeed with a Plainness, and Bluntness, that was rather like to give Offence, and create Prejudice.

THEY cast it in the Teeth of the Jews, that they had always been a *stiff-neck'd* Generation, that their Fathers had been the *Persecutors* of the *Prophets* in old Time, and they the *Betrayers*, and *Murderers* of that *just One*, the Prince of Life, and the only begotten Son of God, when



S E R M. he came into the World. A Method, one

VIII. would think, that with such obstinate

Tempers, should be rather apt to provoke, than persuade: and so it frequently

Acts vii. 54. did; for we read, that *when they heard these Things, they were cut to the Heart, and gnash'd upon St. Stephen with their Teeth:* And when St. Paul urg'd them with

Acts xiii. 45. the same at *Antioch*, they were moved with Envy, and contradicted, and blasphem'd.

AND the *Apostles* were as plain, and blunt with the *Gentiles*, as the *Jews*. St. Paul told the *Athenians* to their Faces; Acts xvii. 22, 23. *that they were too superstitious in all things; that they ignorantly worshipped they knew not whom.* And yet at the same Time, he seem'd to them to be a setter forth of strange Gods, because he preached unto them *Jesus, and the Resurrection*; and taught them to worship a crucified Saviour.

A VERY unsuitable Object, as it must appear to the superficial Judgment of Men, for their Adoration, and as unfitting a Pattern for their Imitation. And yet this is a Point too, that the *Apostles* chiefly labour'd to persuade Men (that is) not only to believe in *Christ*, but to be his Followers;

ers; to follow him in the most rugged, S E R M.  
and least trodden Paths of Virtue, in his V I I I.  
Humility, his Meekness, his Purity, his  
Charity, his Peaceableness, his Patience,  
and Resignation; to *pluck out their right*  
*Eyes; to cut off their right Hands;* to part  
with all that was nearest, and dearest  
to them, most useful, or desirable; their  
Possessions, and Enjoyments, their Rela-  
tions, and their very Lives, (if Need should  
be) in Hopes to find them again, in Fu-  
turity; and to be *rais'd to Glory, as Christ*  
*was.*

AND these harsh Conditions were na-  
kedly propos'd, without Palliation, or Dis-  
guise. So far from that, that St. Paul o-  
penly glories, and triumphs in his Suffer-  
ings; and sets them forth in a Catalogue  
at large; as if this had been the best En-  
couragement that could be given, the fit-  
test Topic of Consolation, that could be  
made use of, to the *Corinthian* Converts.  
Nay he refers the *Hebrews*, even to their  
own Experience, as if the Memory of their  
past Sufferings had some cordial Virtue in  
it to support their Spirits under the Ap-  
prehensions of more to ensue. *Call to Re-* Heb. x.  
VOL. II. S *membrance* 32, &c.

SERM *membrance (says he) the former Days, in*  
 VIII. *which after ye were illuminated, ye endured*  
 ~~~~~ *a great Fight of Afflictions, partly whilst ye*  
were made a gazing Stock, both by Re-
proaches, and Afflictions; and partly whilst
ye became Companions of them that were so
us'd. For ye had Compassion of me in my
Bonds, and took joyfully the Spoiling of your
Goods, knowing in yourselves, that ye have
in Heaven, a better, and an enduring Sub-
stance. Cast not away therefore your Confi-
dence, which hath great Recompence of Re-
ward. For ye have need of Patience, that
after ye have done the Will of God, ye may
receive the Promise.

HARD Sayings these! hard to be digest-
 ed by Flesh and Blood, or to be reconcil'd
 to Sense, or Feeling! And yet this was all
 the Armour the *Apostles*, and *primitive*
Christians had, to oppose against the bar-
 barous Rage of their inhumane Persecu-
 tors. And with this Furniture (seemingly
 so slender) they made a gallant Resistance,
 they bore up against cruel Oppression,
 they grew under the Mower's Hands, fa-
 ster than the Scythe of Destruction could cut
 them down. They multiplied by their

Diminution, they robbed the Bear of her *SERM.*
Whelps, even whilst they were worried by *VIII.*
 her; and took the greatest Spoils, when
 they suffer'd the greatest Violence.

AND though the Church of God passed
 through the Furnace of Persecution ten
 Times over; yet it came out still unhurt,
 and not only so, but with a Form more
 bright, and beautiful, as of the true Spouse
 of *Christ*, and with a Womb more fruit-
 ful, as of the joyful Mother of Children
 without Number.

AND that it might be visible to the whole
 World, that the Propagation of *Christia-*
nity, was neither the Counsel, nor the
 Work of mere Men; Providence wisely so
 order'd it, that the Church had no Pro-
 tection, nor Privilege, hardly any Respite,
 or Forbearance from the civil Powers,
 'till such Time as the Profession of the
Christian Faith had already made its Way
 into the Court, and the Camp, the Cities
 and the Provinces, and almost over-spread
 the whole *Empire*, in Spite of the strictest
 Prohibition, and the fiercest Opposition.
 So entirely independent was it upon any
 S 2 Thing,

SERM. Thing, the Might of Man could do, civil-
VIII. ther to help, or to hinder it.

~ AND now upon the whole Matter, since the Simplicity of the *Gospel* was more convincing than all the Subtlety of its Opposers, and its Weakness more cogent than all their Force; since the Rudeness of Speech, which the *Apostles* us'd, was more persuasive than the most eloquent, and plausible Harangues; since the unpopular Doctrine that they taught, was embrac'd by vast Multitudes, against the *Current* of Prejudice, Custom, and Prescription; against the strong Bent, both of vicious Inclination, and even natural Propensity, with Forfeiture of all their present Ease, and Interest, and at the Hazard, and Expence of their dearest Lives; since the Boldness of the *Apostles* (Men otherwise timorous enough) was so perfectly undaunted in confessing the *Lord Jesus*, and their Patience so invincible, in suffering for him: To conclude, since the copious Variety of Languages, which unstudied, and untaught, they spoke so fluently, were indeed unattainable by any Study, or Industry; and the wonderful Works that they wrought,
were

were really inimitable by any Skill, or Art SERM.
of Man; it must be granted, that by VIII.
what Power soever the *Gospel* prevail'd, it
could not be merely humane. But

Secondly, MIGHT it not be (may *Infi-*
delity say) by some *diabolical* Power? For
the *Devil* is a subtle, and an active Being,
that is able to do many Things, which far
exceed all the Abilities, Contrivance, and
Comprehension of Men: And is it not pos-
sible, that he might employ the *Apostles*,
as his Instruments, and enable them, the
better to recommend them to the World,
to work some such strange Feats, as might
surprize, and amuse the Beholders, and
appear to them truly wonderful, and un-
accountable?

THIS indeed was the malicious Cavil of
the *Scribes*, and *Pharisees*, against our Sa-
viour, that he cast out Devils by *Beelzebub*, Mat xii.
the Prince of Devils. And it was after- 24.
wards a blasphemous Suggestion of some Luke xi.
vile *Apostates*, that he, and all his Fol- 15.
lowers were but a Parcel of *Sorcerers*, and
Magicians, and that they were not unsuc-
cessfully rivall'd by *Simon Magus*, *Appollo-*
nus, and others.

SERM. IN Answer to which last impudent Pretence, it were easy to shew, that most of the Miracles suppos'd to be wrought by such Kind of *Juglers*, are but lamely attested at best, or rather justly to be suspected of Fashood in the Relater, or Imposture in the Performer; and that all of them, if true, are but very inconsiderable, and of no Signification, or Moment, when once they come to be compar'd with those much greater, and more stupendous ones recorded in the Scripture.

BUT this, not falling so directly within the Compass of my present Design, I shall not now further insist on it. I shall only content myself to prove (what I think also will be sufficient to silence all Gain-sayers) that the Miracles which our *Saviour* himself perform'd or empower'd his *Disciples* to perform, by Way of Attestation to their Commission, and Confirmation to their Doctrine; can, upon no Account be ascrib'd to any *diabolical* Power; whether we consider the Nature of the Works themselves, or the Manner in which they were done, or the End at which they aim'd, and the Effect that they had. And *First,*

First, THE very Nature of the Works SERM.
 themselves, those at least that were the VIII.
 most remarkable of them will help to e-
 vince this.

FOR though it may perhaps be granted,
 that the *Devil* by his Insight into natural
 Causes, or his Dexterity in applying them
 in some unusual Manner, may be able to
 effect such real Wonders, as far surpass all
 the Activity, Invention, and Conception of
 us Men; yet it can never be allow'd, that
 he has an absolute, and unlimited Power;
 because that would make him equal in
 Power to God himself, which were both
 absurd, and impious once to imagine.

Now, I think, 'tis sufficiently apparent,
 that some of those most mighty Works that
 were perform'd by our *Saviour*, and his
Apostles, are such, as nothing less than an
 absolute, and unlimited Power could ac-
 complish.

FOR Instance, as I take it; to supersede
 the Use of second Causes, and to cure
 Diseases, incurable by natural Means,
 without any Means at all, or none that
 could be conducive to the Purpose; by a
 single Word, by a transient Touch, by the

SERM. Touch of a *Garment*, or *Apron*, or the
 VIII. Influence of a Shadow; I say, these are
 Works, that plainly bespeak the Interpo-
 sition of an *omnipotent* Power; at least,
 'tis plain, that *Omnipotence* itself could not
 act more absolutely, and independently in
 a like Case; and therefore we may well con-
 clude, that it must be Omnipotence, that
 thus acts in a Manner only becoming itself,
 and that no inferior, to be sure, no oppo-
 site Power would be permitted so far to
 vie with God, and his Attributes.

BUT without all Dispute, that most
 stupendous *Miracle* of all others, the re-
 storing Life to the Dead, which was also
 crown'd by the Resurrection of our Lord
 himself; upon which the *Apostles* build, as
 their main Foundation: This, I say, could
 be achiev'd by no less than the omnipo-
 tent Hand of God.

FOR to restore Life, is equivalent to the
 giving of Life, and to give Life is the
 proper Act of a Creator, such an Act, as
 no Creature, how potent soever, can be
 capable of doing by any inherent Power
 of his own; and therefore not of the *De-
 vil* himself. And it may well be conclu-
 ded,

ded, though we had no other Reason so to SERM.
think; that 'tis perfectly out of the Verge VIII.
of his Power, because he never did at-
tempt any such Thing, that any credible
History informs us of; which yet it may
be presum'd, he would have done, if he
could; had it been only to weaken the
Force of this main Fundamental of the
Christian Religion, and to discredit the
Doctrines grounded thereupon.

AND 'tis observable, that the antient *A-*
pologists are willing to put the Cause upon
this very Issue, and stop the Mouths of
such calumnious Objectors, as ascrib'd the
Miracles of *Christ*, and his *Apostles* to some
magic Art, or *satanical Delusion*; boldly
challenging them, and all their Adherents,
to produce any *Magician*, that ever did
the thousandth Part of what these Men
did, or who could do (not the mighty
Deeds that Scripture mentions) but even
the most inconsiderable Things that can
be imagin'd, even cure a *Fellon*, or a *Tet-*
ter, or draw out a *Thorn* by a Word of
Command; which is pursued with a great
deal of Eloquence, and Smartness by *Ar-*
nobius.

'Tis

SERM.
VIII.

'TIS further observable,

Secondly, THAT as the Works themselves were such, as can hardly be thought feasible to any *diabolical* Power, and were never known to be done by any such; so the Manner of performing them, was contrary to the Use, and Practice of the *Dealers* in *Magic*, and such impious Arts. They were done not slyly, and clanculary, but openly, and fairly in the Presence of Multitudes, without any mysterious Ceremonies, or Preparations to amuse, and prepossess their Fancies, or impose upon their Senses; not by muttering over a few barbarous unintelligible Words, or calling for the Aid of infernal Spirits: But with an Appearance of great Gravity, and Sincerity, and unaffected Devotion, express'd in Prayer to the true God; and the religious, and awful *Invocation of the Name of Jesus*; in Virtue of whose sacred Name alone, they were effected, and not (as *Irenæus* notes) by that of *Simon*, or *Menander*, or *Carpocrates*, or any of those cunning Practitioners, and Factors for the Devil; and therefore it would be highly unreasonable, and injurious, to ascribe them to the Devil.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, BUT moreover this will be in-
disputably clear, from the End, at which
these miraculous Works aim'd, and the Ef-
fect which they obtain'd; for the direct
Aim, and Tendency was to establish, the
Belief, and Worship of one supreme God;
to bear authentic Testimony to the *Reve-*
lation of his Will, and to introduce a ra-
tional Religion, to enforce the Precepts of
Holiness, of Justice, of Charity and Pu-
rity, to confound the *Devil*, and all his
Works; to overthrow the Kingdom of
Darkness, to expose the Folly, and Fal-
lacy, by which it was supported; to root
out all Superstition, and Idolatry, and the
gross Impieties, and Impurities, with which
they were accompanied. In a Word, to
drive the unclean Spirits from the usurp'd
Possession of Mens Souls, and Bodies, and
to dislodge them from their *Temples* too,
and all their dark Holes, and Corners,
And the Effect prov'd every Way answer-
able to the Design; for a speedy Refor-
mation, and a thorough Purgation soon
ensued. Men were moulded into Prin-
ciples, and Practices entirely new; the
Name, the Doctrine, the Laws of *Christ*
were

SERM.

VIII.

SERM. were own'd, and submitted to; and *Satan*

VIII. *instantly fell as Lightning from Heaven;*

his Tyranny was at an End, his Oracles were struck dumb, and his sacrifices ceas'd:

Luke x.

18.

He, and all his *Angels* were so subject, even to the meanest *Christian*, that their very Presence, as the *Apologists* scruple not to boast, mov'd them into a Confession that they were no Gods, but very *Devils*, (an Experiment, upon the Success of which, *Tertullian* boldly stakes his own, or any Christian's Life.)

His finest Feats of Activity were manifestly outdone; his lying Wonders detected; his curious Arts of Exorcisms, Spells, and Incantations baffled, and those that practis'd them converted, as we read in this Chapter. And *Simon the Samaritan*, that *Arch-Conjurer*, and *Impostor* dismounted (as * *Arnobius* relates) from his fiery Chariot, by a Word of St. *Peter*; and instead of flying into *Heaven*, as he vainly pretended, breaking both his Legs by his Fall, and afterwards perishing miserably.

* Libr. contra Gentiles.

AND St. *Chrysoſtom* in his Time, confi- SERM.
dently affirms, and appeals to the Know- VIII.
ledge of many living Witneſſes for the
Truth of it; that the famous Oracle of
Daphne was ſilenc'd, as *Apollo* himſelf,
when urg'd to it confeſs'd, by a dead Mar-
tyr's Bones; by which it ſeems the Place
was polluted, but the Fiend plainly con-
founded.

Now that which I would infer from
theſe Inſtances is this; 'tis certain, the *De-
vil* is not ſo raw a *Politician*, but that he
knows, *That no Kingdom divided againſt it
ſelf can ſtand*: And therefore could he work
Miracles never ſo many, and great, he
would not employ his Inſtruments to act
counter to each other; he would not com-
miſſion them to work any for the promo-
ting true Religion, and Virtue; to be ſure
he would not diſtinguiſh any Miracle, that
had a Tendency that Way, by the evident
Marks of a ſuperior, and controuling Pow-
er; he would not ſo far diſcountenance, and
diſcourage thoſe his Agents, that are moſt
peculiarly devoted to his own Service, he
would not contribute ſo much to his own
Diſgrace, and perform a ſtudied Part ſo
incon-

SERM. inconsistent with his Nature, Design, and
 VIII. Interest. And consequently, unless Light,
 and Darkneſs be all one; Piety, and Im-
 piety the ſame Thing, the Miracles up-
 on the Credit of which the *Gospel* came
 warranted, and recommended, can up-
 on no Terms be imputed to a *diabolical*
 Power.

III. *Thirdly*, It remains therefore in the
third, and *laſt* Place, that the Power by
 which the *Gospel* ſo mightily, ſo wonder-
 fully prevail'd, muſt be truly, and emi-
 nently *divine*.

It was *the Demonſtration of the Spirit,*
and of Power (as *St. Paul* calls it) that
 outſhone all other Evidence, and conclu-
 ded ſo forcibly for the Truth of *Chriſtia-*
nity againſt all Gainſayers, and Oppoſers.
 The *Demonſtration of the Spirit, and of*
Power, I ſay; that is, as I take it, a Com-
 pletion of *Prophecies* by *Miracles*, and a
 mutual Confirmation of each by other;
 which is the moſt evident, and infallible
 Mark, that can be, of the divine Wiſdom,
 and Power, equally intereſting itſelf in ſuch
 Events. For if it be expreſſly foretold, that
 ſuch

such a Person, so qualified, and describ'd, SERM.
shall, in a certain Period of Time, but af- VIII.
ter many Ages, arise, and work such and
such astonishing *Wonders*, far transcending
the Skill, or Force of Men, or *Devils*; and
if the Person exactly answering to this De-
scription, do accordingly arise, and fulfil
the Prediction, by the undoubted Per-
formance of those very Wonders: And if
the same Person shall undertake himself to
foretel, other and greater Miracles to be
accomplish'd, after his Decease, but in his
Name, and by his Power, and this also be
verified in the Event; and if the whole
Design of this Person's coming into the
World, appears at the same Time, to be
every Way right worthy of God; and the
Doctrine that he teaches has all the plain
Characters of intrinsic Truth and Good-
ness; I say, when there is a signal Con-
currence of all these important Circum-
stances, it most evidently shews, that the
Prescience and Omnipotence of God, are
jointly concern'd in the whole Scheme,
and with a direct Intention to do Honour
to the Person so distinguish'd, and to give
Weight,

SERM. Weight, and Authority to all his Words;
VIII. and Actions.



Mat. xi.
3, 4, 5.

If. xxxv.
5, 6.

Now this is undeniably the Case of our Lord, and Saviour *Jesus Christ*, and he himself asserts his own Dignity, and Commission, upon the Strength of this very Argument. For when *John* sent two of his Disciples, with this Question; *Art thou he that should come* (meaning the *Messiah*) *or do we look for another?* His Reply was; *Go your Way, and tell John what Things ye have seen, and heard; how that the Blind see, the Lame walk, the Lepers are cleansed, the Deaf hear, the Dead are rais'd; and to the Poor the Gospel is preach'd;* directly referring to the Prophecy of *Isaiah*, wherein these very Things are foretold.

AND as he was a Worker of Miracles, and shew'd upon many Occasions, an absolute Empire over Nature; so he was a most eminent Prophet, and foretold the most wonderful, and *astonishing* Events, as *astonishingly* fulfill'd. He foretold his own Death, and Resurrection, and he arose accordingly from the Dead on the third Day; he foretold his own Ascension into Heaven,

ven, and visibly ascended after forty Days; S E R M.
 he foretold the Mission of the *Holy Ghost*, VIII.
 which was exhibited in that unheard-of
 Gift of Tongues, conferr'd on the *Apostles*;
 not in the ordinary Way of Conveyance,
 but by the immediate Infusion, and Utte-
 rance of the Spirit, that at once inspir'd
 their Thoughts, and actuated their Organs;
 enabling them all on the Sudden intelligi-
 bly, and for that very Reason convincingly
 to speak to the People of all Nations, and
 Languages; he foretold, that besides o-
 ther wonderful Works, they should be em-
 power'd to confer, even this extraordinary
 Gift upon others; a Commission that they
 executed at Discretion, and with certain
 Effect, as often as the Honour of their
 Lord, and Advancement of his Religion
 requir'd it.

HE foretold, that they should have Power
 to cast out *Devils* in his Name; accordingly
 they exerted a commanding, and controul-
 ing Power over the *Devil*, and all his most
 subtle, and powerful Agents. To this was
 owing the sudden Stop that was put to the
 Sorceries of *Simon*, whom the People from
 the least to the greatest, regarded as the

SERM. great Power of God. But he beholding
 VIII. with Wonder the Miracles, and Signs that
 he could not imitate, in Pretence at least,
 became a Believer, and was baptiz'd, and
 under that Colour hop'd, upon an Offer of
 Money, to obtain the Power of conferring
 the *Holy Ghost*, by his own unhallow'd
 Hands: But he met with a peremptory
 Refusal in those Words of St. Peter, *Thy*
 Acts viii. *Money perish with thee, because thou hast*
 20. *thought that the Gift of God may be pur-*
chas'd with Money. But this impious, and
 blasphemous Thought, as it should seem
 by the Event, being not to be pardoned,
 he had Recourse in vain to his devilish
 Art, and perish'd in an Attempt to rival
 our Lord's Ascension, as was before noted
 from *Arnobius*. These Predictions, of which
 I have reminded you, were brought to
 pass within a short Space of Time, after
 they were deliver'd; and the *Notoriety* of
 the Facts was such, that they could not
 but fall under the Notice of the greatest E-
 nemies, and Opposers of *Christ*, and his
 Religion; having the Apostles also for
 faithful Monitors, lest they should have
 been stupid enough to overlook them.
 And

And the Accomplishment of these Wonders, was a most signal Proof of a Power, and Wisdom far surpassing all that can be conceiv'd to belong to mere Man, or can with any Shadow of Reason be ascrib'd to the Devil; whose utmost Efforts were at the same Time visibly overpower'd, and all his Stratagems confounded.

S E R M.
VIII.

It appears then, I hope, by whose Help, and by what Means the *Word of God* from such unpromising Beginnings, *grew so mightily*, and so speedily prevail'd, over the unbelieving World: For it manifestly was carried on, in Opposition to the united Force, and Cunning of Men, and Devils, by a Power eminently superior to both; and therefore most certainly divine. And now having, as I trust, made out what I propos'd, I shall conclude with a brief Reflexion, or two upon the whole.

AND *First* it deserves to be reflected on, with just Wonder, and ought always to be esteem'd, as a most illustrious Testimony to the Truth of *Christianity*, that it should be propagated at first, with such incredible Success, and by Methods so very extraordinary, and peculiar. Which Cir-

SERM. cumstance alone (if no other Miracle had
VIII. been wrought in Confirmation of the Go-
spel) would have pass'd for no less than
miraculous. For it is certainly so, that a
Doctrine so severe, and unacceptable to
Flesh and Blood, so irreconcilable to the
secular Interest, as well as corrupt Inclina-
tions of Mankind, so violently oppos'd by
all the Force, and Malice of Men, and
Devils, should irresistibly persuade both
Jew and *Gentile*, and draw the whole
World after it by Cords so strong, and yet
so easy, without any Kind of outward Com-
pulsion, without any Prospect of Advan-
tage or Reward, except what was future,
and invisible; but with the present, and
visible Terror of the extremest Hardships,
and Sufferings: This, I say, if all other
Tokens had been wanting, must have been
own'd to be the Effect of a Power truly
divine. And hereby the *Christian* Religion
stands remarkably distinguish'd, from all
religious *Impostures*, whose Rise, and
Growth have always manifestly been ow-
ing to the Plausibility, and Palatableness
of the Doctrines taught, or to the Subtlety
and Artifice of the Teachers, or to the last,
and

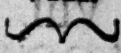
and strongest Arguments of a bad Cause, S E R M.
Menace, and Coaction. Such was the Intro- VIII.
 duction of *Mahometism* into the World,
 which is a Scheme of Religion compound-
 ed out of all other Religions, that it might
 recommend itself to some of all; and 'tis
 dress'd up with a good deal of Art, and
 Cunning, and admirably suited to the Pa-
 lates of the most sensual; and yet with all
 those plausible Coverings, it was forc'd to
 hew out its Way with the Sword, and it is
 supported to this Day by the same Me-
 thod of Violence.

WHEREAS the *Christian* Religion stript
 of all these Advantages, and Aids, and
 clogg'd with all possible Disadvantages, and
 Impediments, found a Way unforc'd, and
 prevail'd by its own *native* Efficacy, and e-
 ven by suffering baffled, and subdued all the
 boisterous Rage, and Cruelty of its most in-
 veterate Enemies; so that we may well believe
 it, what it has distinguish'd itself to be, the
Power of God, and the *Wisdom* of God.

Secondly, SINCE the Gospel has all along
 from the Beginning, *prevail'd so mightily*,
 and triumph'd so remarkably over all Op-
 position; we rely upon the same divine

SERM. Power and Wisdom, by which it hath been
 VIII. hitherto supported, that it will still prevail,
 still increase, and advance conquering, and
 to conquer! For we may comfort ourselves
 in this, that the *Christian Faith* hath already
 been engaged in all Sorts of Conflicts, and
 Trials, but always superior: Hath been op-
 posed (but always in vain) by Arts, and
 Arguments, and Artillery of all Sorts; so
 that no modern *Engine* can now be plaid
 upon us: No subtle Stratagem invented,
 but what hath been antiently used, and
 often baffled.

EVEN the Author that has made so
 much Noise of late, under the abusive Ti-
 tle, (*A Discourse of the Grounds, and Rea-
 sons of the Christian Religion*) attempts in-
 fidiously to weaken, undermine and over-
 turn its Foundation; even this Author
 has advanced nothing, but what has been
 heretofore urged, and often by his Prede-
 cessors in *Infidelity*, and *Apostasy*; and as
 often solidly answer'd, and silenc'd by as
 able Advocates. In particular, the pre-
 tended Misapplication of Texts cited in the
New Testament from the *Old*, or their
 Want of Pertinence to the Purpose, for
 which

which they were alledged. This is a Mat-^{S E R M.}
 ter that has been long since carefully con-^{VIII.}
 sider'd and judiciously accounted for by 
*Spanbemi*us, and *Huetius*, who have learn-
 edly proved by a perfect Induction of Par-
 ticulars, that all the most remarkable *Pro-*
phesies solely, or eminently relating to the
Messiah expected, have been punctually
 verified in the *Jesus*, whom we believe.
 And what has this *famed Author* done?
 Has he refuted the judicious Accounts that
 have been hitherto so esteem'd? Has he
 invalidated the positive, and standing Proofs
 of the Completion of the *Prophecies*, by a
 regular, and rational Reply? No such Mat-
 ter. Has he then put additional Strength
 into the old Objections? Not that neither.
 He has only steel'd them over with more
 Confidence, and pointed them with more
 Malice, and varnish'd them over with
 fresh Colours, and a venomous Mixture
 of such Suggestions, as favour rank of
Blasphemy. He may delude himself and o-
 thers to Perdition, but the Cause of the
 Church of *Christ* can be in no Danger from
 his Attacks; for our *Saviour* himself has

280 *Of the swift Progress, &c.*

SERM. told us, that *the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.*

VIII.

*Now to God the Father, God the Son,
and God the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is
due, all Praise, Glory, Might, Majesty and
Dominion, now and for evermore. Amen.*



SERMON



S E R M O N IX.

The Nature of Truth and Falshood consider'd.



EPHES. iv. 35.

*Wherefore putting away Lying,
speak every Man Truth with his
Neighbour; for we are Members
one of another.*



THE Text comprizes, *First*, a S E R M. IX.
strict Prohibition of the detestable Practice of Lying, so familiar among the *Heathen Greeks*, that it was but necessary to warn the *Christian Converts* of it. *Secondly*, as strict

SERM. strict an Injunction of the contrary Virtue,

IX. called *Veracity*: And *Thirdly*, a very weighty Reason to convince us, of our Obligation hereunto; and to enforce it upon us; viz. our mutual Relation, and Combination, not only as Men, and Citizens, but above all as Christians. *Wherefore putting away Lying, speak every Man Truth with his Neighbour; for we are Members one of another.* From which Words I shall speak to these several Points following; which may be of Use (I conceive) both to inform us of our Duty, and to induce us to put it in Practice.

I. *First*, I SHALL enquire into the Nature, and Formality of a Lye.

II. *Secondly*, I SHALL endeavour to discover and lay open the Turpitude, and Baseness of it in General; as also

III. *Thirdly*, THE particular Malignity of most of the several Sorts of Lyes, that commonly pass up and down, and make Mischief in the World.

IV. *Fourthly*, I SHALL examine, whether all Lying be universally forbidden.

V. *Fifthly*,

V. *Fifthly*, WHETHER every Deviation SERM.
from Truth, does involve Men in the Im- IX.
putation of a Lye, and is to be condemn-
ed as such. And then, 

VI. *Sixthly*, and *Lastly*, How far we
are obliged to keep to simple Truth, and
declare it. And

I. *First*, I SHALL enquire into the Na-
ture, and Formality of a Lye. But in or-
der to clear my Way towards this, I must
first premise; that Truth is a Debt, in
which all Men (so far as every ones parti-
cular Concern reaches) have a common,
and indisputable Right. For the great
Creator of all Things, imparted the Fa-
culty of Speech to Mankind, and wisely
suited it to our Nature and Condition, as
sociable Creatures; to the End we might
effectually reap the Advantages, and Com-
forts of that Society we were framed for.
And this devolves a respective Obligation
upon all, to employ that excellent Gift to
the End, and Purpose for which it was
designed; and by making our Tongues the
just, and clear Interpreters of our Minds,
and truly representing our Thoughts to
each

SERM. each other ; to lay the Foundation of equal Commerce, and faithful Friendship;
 IX. and all the interchangeable good Offices of Humanity, Justice, or Charity. And to this we must be necessarily, and indispensably obliged; because if we could suppose ourselves at Liberty to speak one Thing, and mean another, or in any wise to disguise, and misrepresent our own Thoughts: That very Faculty which was given us for our mutual Help, and Benefit, would be turned into a fatal Instrument of Mischief, whereby to betray each other into Errors, and Snares, and all Manner of Inconveniences.

AND this will help us to discern, what the Nature of a Lye is: For as Truth preserves an exact Agreement betwixt the Thoughts, and Words; or at least never voluntarily creates any Mistake, or Misapprehension in the Hearer, which may turn to his Detriment, or that of any other Person; so a Lye is an Untruth, or a suppos'd Untruth, importing a Disagreement between the Speaker's Words, and Thoughts; and accompanied with a strong Tendency, if not a direct Intention to deceive, and injure

injure his Neighbour. This I take to be SERM.
the Definition of a Lye; and according to IX.
this Definition, the Matter of a Lye (you
see) may be either an Untruth, or a sup-
posed Untruth indifferently, as it shall hap-
pen; but the Formality of it, ever con-
sists, either in the evil Intention of the
Speaker, or the evil Tendency of the
Thing itself; viz. to deceive one's Neigh-
bour to his Hurt.

AND this will evidently appear to be
the Case upon the slightest Attention: For
though Truth, and Falshood taken in the
same Sense, be irreconcilable Opposites;
yet this Opposition is no necessary Ingre-
dient to make up a Lye: Because that
which is true in Fact, may be a Lye, not-
withstanding; as being contrary to the pre-
sent Sentiments of the Speaker.

HE that utters a Falshood, thinking,
and knowing it so to be, he manifestly en-
deavours to impose upon his Neighbour's
Belief; and that oftentimes to his very
great Prejudice.

AND he that reports a Truth, not know-
ing it to be so, but thinking it to be other-
wise; does equally design to abuse his
Neighbour;

SERM. Neighbour; and therefore he is every whit
IX. as disingenuous a Lyar as the other, tho'
in Effect not always so mischievous.

So that Truth itself may, and does put on the formal Essence, and has all the vile Qualities of a Lye, when it is injuriously applied to the same wicked Purposes.

AND on the other Hand, Falshood has such a natural Aptness in most Cases to deceive, and by deceiving to injure People; that it cannot be acquitted of that Deceit, and Wrong, even when 'tis utter'd without any such direct Intention in the Speaker; or any such positive Effect upon the Hearer.

FOR he that makes himself the Reporter of what he knows, or thinks to be false, or does not know to be true; that Man notoriously misapplies the Use of Speech, in such a Manner, as may prove very detrimental to some Body or other. And if it should not, it is in no Sort owing however to any good Will of his; or any the least Regard to Truth, or Justice.

AND the Guilt of a Lye still rests upon him, though not in the same Degree, as if it had been directly set to Work upon

on

on Mischief, by deliberate Malice, and SERM.
Contrivance. IX.

FOR he is a Liar, who being void of all that Tenderness, which he ought to have for his Neighbour's Good; relates such Falshoods at all Adventures, as may probably redound to his Disadvantage.

BUT he is a more malicious, and a more dangerous Lyar, who lies in Wait to deceive, and to defraud, and keeps his devilish Invention constantly employ'd about this very Thing.

IN one Word, the very Formality of a Lye, must at last consist in an Intention, or Tendency (at least) to deceive People, and to deceive them to their Hurt; which is a manifest Violation of one of the most fundamental Laws of our Nature, and a notorious Abuse of the natural Talent of Speech: Whereas the Falshood, or Fallacy that is not attended with any injurious Consequence, either in the Intention of the Speaker, or the ordinary Course of Things, seems to be sinless, as 'tis harmless; at least I think, we must allow it so to be, when it is dexterously accommodated to the Benefit of the Person more immediately concern'd

SERM. cern'd in it without any possible Wrong
 IX. to any Body besides. For this is so far
 from perverting the Use of Speech, that it
 is in Effect to pursue the first Aim, and
 Design of it, which was undoubtedly the
 Help, and Comfort of those endow'd
 with it.

AND therefore this Practice, (when the
 Weight, and Urgency of the Case seems
 to make it necessary) deserves not to incur
 the Blame, nor to be branded with the
 Infamy of Lying: For this is no wise in-
 jurious, as a Lye always is, or at least is so
 very apt to be, that its Injuriousness must
 always make a Part of the Definition, and
 help to constitute, and compleat its Ef-
 fence.

AND let so much satisfy at present for
 the first Enquiry, concerning the Nature,
 and Formality of a Lye; which I may
 have occasion hereafter to confirm, both
 from Reason, and Fact. In the mean
 Time I proceed,

II. *Secondly*, To endeavour to discover,
 and lay open the Turpitude, and Baseness
 of a Lye in General; as also the particular
 Malig-

Malignity of most of those several Sorts of SERM.
Lyes, that commonly pass up and down, IX.
and make Mischief in the World.

AND the Turpitude, and Baseness of it in General, is sufficiently discoverable; *First*, From its Author the Devil; and its Hatred to God. *Secondly*, From the Company with which it is rank'd, and the Punishment with which it is threatned, in holy Scripture. *Thirdly*, From the deserved ill Opinion it has always had in the World. *Fourthly*, From the many ill Consequences that are owing to it. And *Fifthly*, Its absolute Inconsistency, with our mutual Relations, as Men, as Citizens, and Christians,

First, I SAY, its Turpitude is sufficiently discoverable, from its Author the Devil, (and its Hatred to God) as being his darling Offspring. For *he is a Liar, and* John viii.
the Father of it; when he speaketh a Lye, ^{44.}
he speaketh of his own: 'Tis his Talent, 'tis his very Nature: Nay 'tis the accursed Engine, with which he assailed, and overthrew the Integrity of our first Parents; and overwhelmed the World with Sin, and Misery. And therefore it must needs

SERM. be (as 'tis declared to be) an Abomination to
 IX. God; the God of Love, who could not
 ~~~~~ lye to deceive his Creatures: The God of  
 Love who could take no Pleasure in their  
 Misery; but on the contrary, must be ter-  
 ribly incensed to see his own most just, and  
 gracious Purposes contradicted, blaspheme-  
 med, and opposed by an impudent Lye.  
 And surely the diabolical Original, and per-  
 nicious Effects, which render it so justly  
 odious to God; must give us a Sense of  
 the moral Turpitude that is in it; and if  
 we consider it, create an Abhorrence too,  
 But

*Secondly,* THE Company with which it  
 is ranked, and the Punishment with which  
 it is threatned in holy Scripture, will be a  
 farther Conviction to us. In the 3<sup>d</sup> Chap-  
 ter to the *Colossians*, we find, that *Anger,*  
*Wrath, Malice, Blasphemy, filthy Commu-*  
*nication, and Lying* are put into the same  
 Catalogue; and equally indicted, as *Limbs*  
 of the *old Man, with his Deeds.* And it  
 is peremptorily denounced in the *Revela-*  
*tions*, that the *Fearful and Unbelieving,*  
*and Murderers, and the Abominable, and*  
*Whoremongers, and Sorcerers, and Idola-*  
*ters*

Ver. 8,  
 9, 10,

Chap. xxi  
 8.

*ters, and all Lyars, or whosoever loveth, and maketh a Lye shall have their Part in the Lake, which burneth with Fire and Brimstone.* From whence we may, and ought indeed to infer; that, that Sin which is joined both in the Accusation, and Sentence with some of the most heinous Sins that are, is itself also very heinous. SERM.  
IX.

*Thirdly,* THAT Men may for once be judg'd by themselves in this Case; we may fairly appeal to that deserv'd ill Opinion, which it has all along had in the World; for hardly any Character is so vile, and despicable in the general Esteem of Mankind as that of a Lyar. It is what every Body pursues with the last Degree of Contempt in others, and rejects with the utmost Scorn, and Detestation, when taxed with it themselves; nay, the Imputation is held to be so gross and foul, that Men frequently think it worth the while to wash it off, with their own, or their Accuser's Blood; and rather than pass for Lyars, they take care to prove themselves Murderers. A very unsuitable Way indeed to express their Detestation of a Lye! But yet this which is but the unwarrantable



SERM. Practice of some, proceeds from the real,

IX. and well grounded Sense of all the rest;  
 to wit, that Lying is of all others, a Practice the most infamous, and detestable. And the World I believe, would scarce so readily concur to set a Brand of Ignominy upon this single Vice, were it not, that the Moral Evil of it stares us full in the Face; and is too ugly to be overlook'd. But

*Fourthly*, If Men should still want to be made more sensible of this, from the Observation, and Experience of all Ages; I might refer them to the many ill Consequences, which are justly chargeable upon it. For most assuredly, there is hardly any other Sin against our Neighbour, that reems with more Mischief; or disturbs, and annoys humane Life more than this. It is a Sin that perverts the original Use of Speech, and thereby defeats the main End of Society, and undermines the very Foundation of all Tranquillity, and Safety in our several Possessions, Properties, and Rights. It abuses People's good Nature, and Credulity; and takes Advantage of their Candour. It makes bold with their  
 Repu-

Reputation, and sometimes basely attempts S E R M.  
their very Innocence, and Life. It cre- IX.

ates Misunderstandings in Families, and separates very Friends: It sows Diffensions in Neighbourhoods, and enkindles Jealousies in Kingdoms. In one Word, it breaks through all the strongest Bonds of Faith, and Honour; and invades all, that Men hold valuable, dear, or sacred: And the Tongue that is framed, and fashioned to it, *sets on Fire the whole Course of Nature*, Jam. iii. 6. *and is itself set on Fire of Hell.* And what a World of Iniquity must there be in that Practice, which makes such mad Havock abroad, and draws such a Train of ill Consequences after it.

*Fifthly and Lastly*, As its Immorality is abundantly evident from what has been already said; so it is left perfectly without Excuse, in that it is so absolutely inconsistent with our mutual Relations, and Obligations, as Men, as Citizens, and as Christians.

AND this is the very Reason, why here we are so strictly enjoined; *to put away Lying, and speak every Man Truth with his Neighbour*, even because we are Mem-

SERM. *bers one of another.* For there is in Na-

IX.  ture a very close Alliance between all Man-kind; nay, the Dependence of Men upon, and their Subserviency to one another, seems to be no less necessary, than that of the Members in the same individual Body. And as 'tis unnatural for the Eye wilfully (as it were) to misguide the Feet; so 'tis for one Man to lye, or defraud another; Truth being as needful to guide, and govern our mutual Entercourse, each with other, as the Direction of the Eye is, to conduct the Feet.

BUT when Men are combined together in a Body Politick, the better to pursue those Ends, for which they are naturally fitted, and for which God designed them, this lays them under an additional Tye, to observe the fundamental Laws of Society in General; as well as that of particular Societies, into which they are incorporated; among both which, the Precepts of Veracity, and Fidelity must of Necessity hold their Place. And these ought most inviolably to be observ'd; because otherwise the Comforts of Society will be in a great Measure lost, and Men had as good almost



almost live as wild, and unciviliz'd as the S E R M.  
 Beasts, as be perpetually laying in Wait, to IX.  
 ensnare each other in their daily Commu-  
 nication.

AND when these Societies are made up of *Christians*, the Union is much more intimate, and the Obligation is much stronger, much more sacred. For *Christians* are by Profession the Followers of *Christ*, in *whose Mouth no Guile was found*; and therefore it is of all Things the most incongruous, to name his Name with lying Lips. Nay *Christians are the Body of Christ*, (as says the Apostle) and *Members in particular*. Nay, 1 Cor. xii. 27. as they hold the Head which is *Christ*, and are knit together, and grow up in Love; they are, they ought to be of one Heart, of one Soul, and to have but one common Sense; so that if *one Member suffer, all the Members must suffer with it*. And therefore for one *Christian* to lye to another, is (in a spiritual Sense) as unnatural, and unreasonable, as for the Tongue to shed Venome upon itself, or the Heart to divide one Ventricle from the other. Upon the whole therefore it must be granted, that that is a very enormous Sin in-

SERM. deed, that thus at once snaps asunder  
 IX. all the most engaging Ties of natural Af-  
 finity, civil Relation, and *Christian* Fellow-  
 ship.

AND thus far I have endeavour'd to discover, and lay open the moral Turpitude, and Baseness of a Lye in General. Give me leave moreover,

III. *Thirdly*, to detect the particular Malignity of most of the several Sorts of Lies, that commonly pass up and down, and make much Mischief in the World.

THE vending of Lyes is so current, and so constant a Trade; the Multiplicity of the false Wares so great, and the Abuses, and Injuries that People suffer by this Means, are so many, and gross; that I have not Time to set them forth distinctly. It shall suffice, if amidst this vast Variety, I stigmatize only those, that are the most customary, and familiar in People's Mouths; and of these some are jocular Lyes, and some are serious Lyes: The jocular Lye is that which is wittily invented for the Sake of Merriment, and  
 Diver-

Diversiſion; the ſerious Lye has more De- SERM.  
liberation in it, and farther Deſigns. IX.

AND of this latter Sort, ſome are *judicial*,  
and ſome *extrajudicial*. That I call a *ju-  
dicial* Lye, which is dreſſed up in Form  
of Teſtimony, and ſolemnly deliver'd in,  
for Evidence in a public Court: That's an  
*extrajudicial* Lye, which paſſes only in  
common Entercourſe, and occaſional Con-  
verſation.

AND of theſe again; ſome proceed from  
Envy, Malice, or Revenge; ſome from the  
Love of filthy Lucre, or any Kind of ſor-  
did Intereſt; ſome from Pride, and Va-  
nity; and ſome from a Senſe of Shame,  
and Fear, and an evil Conſcience. And  
they are levelled, ſome againſt a Man's  
Goods; and ſome againſt his good Name;  
and ſome againſt his very Life itſelf; nay,  
there are Lyes of ſo malignant a Nature,  
that they are no other than Snares of  
Death, to the heedleſs Soul that gives them  
Credit.

BUT if we take them all together in the  
Groſs, we may fairly pronounce, that  
whenceſoever they ſpring, or whitherſoever  
they tend or aim, their Beginning is al-  
ways



SERM. ways in Wickedness, and their End in Mis-  
IX. chief, more or less.

~ AND consequently, though all of them are not attended with the like Aggravations; yet there is none of them without a sufficient Share of Guilt; too much I doubt, the most colourable of them all, to abide a strict Examination. For,

*First*, To begin with that which looks as airy, and pleasant, as if it had nothing to answer for; the *jocular Lye* I mean: Even that I think can hardly be reckon'd in the Number of those Things, that are just, and honest; much less those that are lovely, and of good Report. Nay, it must pass, I fear, for one Instance of that Kind of *foolish Talking and Jesting*, which the *Apostle* says, *is not convenient*. For take it at the best in those, who addict themselves much to it; it betrays a great deal of Levity, and vain Affectation of Wit, at the Expence of Truth, and Modesty; at the Hazard of their own Reputation, and that of other Men too.

Eph. v.  
4.

AND of those, that set up for Banterers, it is observable; that as the whole Burden of their Discourse is Sham, and Fiction,  
and

and studied Impertinence; so they can SERM.  
scarce tell how to frame themselves to be IX.  
serious, or to utter a sober Truth; at least  
'tis not every Body that knows how to take  
them, or how far to trust them. And by  
this Means, the main End of Speech, (which  
was honestly to convey our Thoughts to  
each other, that so we might all act upon  
the Square, and live together in mutual  
Confidence) is in a great Measure eluded;  
though not so maliciously perverted, as by  
the grave deliberate Lyar.

AND yet to lye even in Jest, is not so  
harmless a Thing to one's Neighbour, as  
they that use it, may be apt to imagine.  
For to abuse any Man's Simplicity, and  
Credulity on Purpose to lead him into an  
Error, that may expose him to Laughter,  
or some other greater Inconvenience; to  
fasten imaginary Crimes upon a Man, or  
to dress up an Infirmary, or a Mishap in  
Colours invented purely to make it look  
ridiculous; is an Injury mingled with Con-  
tempt, that favours as little of Candour, as  
it does of Truth.

NOR will it be much Allevation in this  
Case, to be sure, far from a Compensation,  
to

SERM. to alledge; it was but in Jest, and no Man-

IX. ner of Harm was meant by it. For to  
lead a Man into a Ditch in Jest, would  
be no Ease to his Fall; and to strike at a  
Man's Reputation, purely for Trial of  
Skill, would neither allay the Smart, nor  
prevent the Blemish; 'tis but small Satis-  
faction, when a Man has mocked, abused,  
and damnified his Friend, to say, was I  
not in Sport? In short, he that bolts out  
a Lye in Sport, and at Randome, is an-  
swerable for the ill Effects of it; though  
possibly he might neither foresee, nor de-  
sign them. For (as has been before ob-  
served) the very evil Tendency of a Lye  
to deceive People to their Hurt, is Ground  
sufficient to arraign it of Injustice, even  
without any ill Intention of the Speaker,  
or any mischievous Operation upon the  
Hearer. And the Reason is, because he  
that uses this indiscreet Sort of Liberty,  
though he intends no Mischief, yet he  
cannot always, and 'tis seldom, or never  
that he does, provide against it; for he  
neither knows, nor considers what Vexa-  
tion, Trouble, Disgrace, or Damage, it  
may create to some Body or other: And  
when



when it so happens, the Wrong apparently S E R M.  
 lies at his Door; nay, and even though no IX.  
 Harm ensues, there is no Thanks due to  
 him; nor is he indeed to be excused; be-  
 cause he took no Care to prevent it. Up-  
 on this Account it was, that *Pythagoras*  
 was wont to say; "Chuse rather to cast a  
 " Stone at Adventures, than an idle Speech;  
 " for who can tell indeed whom the one,  
 " or the other may hit? And a jocular Lye  
 is most certainly one of those idle Speeches,  
 that may do more harm than one is a-  
 ware of: Nay, 'tis to be fear'd, that 'tis  
 one of *those idle Speeches*, for which our  
*Saviour* says, *We must give Account at the* Mat. xii.  
*Day of Judgment*; as being utterly unpro-<sup>36.</sup>  
 fitable to any good Purpose, and almost na-  
 turally Productive of Evil. And I need  
 not have spent so much Breath to prove it  
 so, but that the comical Humour in which  
 it is sometimes clad, is apt to make Peo-  
 ple judge it as innocent, as it is ludicrous.  
 But if these ludicrous Lyes are by no  
 Means to be acquitted; those that are  
 more serious, and doubtless more designing,  
 will deserve to be condemned.

SERM. FOR Instance;

IX. *Secondly*, THE fordid mercenary Lye, that proceeds from a Principle of Covetousness, and Craft, and is made Use of as a Bait to catch the Unwary; what shall we think of that? Why, 'tis so common in Matters of Commerce, and Traffic, that one would think there were no Trading without it; that is to say, no Trading without Cheating; which yet it were both uncharitable, and unreasonable to think: And therefore it concerns all Traders, not only to put away Lying themselves, but to discountenance it all they can, in the Way of Business, as being both a Prejudice, and a Scandal to Trade: For when all is said and done, a Lye is no better than a down-wright Cheat. For that *Seller*, who by a glozing Tongue endeavours to conceal the Fault of his Commodity, or to commend it for the good Qualities which it has not, is but framing a Deceit for the Buyer the mean while, to make him the better content with a bad Pennyworth.

AND he that sets an extravagant Price upon what he sells, and then by strong Asseverations labours to extort the Buyer's Assent

Assent to the Truth of what he says; he is S E R M.  
a Spoiler in a double Sense; for he offers a IX.  
Violence to the Man's Modesty, good Na-  
ture, and Candour; at the same Time,  
that he cozens him of his Money.

AND this is no Exaggeration, but the plain State of the Matter, even as the Scripture itself; nay, the express Law of *Moses* will inform us. For we read *Lev. xix. 11. Ye shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lye one to another.* From whence we may observe the strict Affinity that there is betwixt Stealing, and Lying; and how both center, as it were, in false Dealing. And indeed, when a Lye is employ'd, as an Instrument, to skreen unlawful Gain from those a Man deals with; the Difference is very inconsiderable; its only that the Thief does that covertly, or perhaps forcibly with his Hands; which the Lyar does as sily, and effectually with his Tongue. But

*Thirdly*, THERE is another Sort of Lying very rife in the World, perhaps much more injurious than this, because it robs People of a Treasure, that no Money can repair; this is it, that springs from the very  
Root



SERM. Root of Bitterness, Envy, Malice, Animo-

IX. sity, Revenge, and the like; and it deals chiefly in Obloquy, and Defamation, Whifpering, and Backbiting, Calumny, and false Accufation. And a Slanderer is certainly of all Lyars one of the moft deteftable; becaufe he neareft refembles his *Father the Devil, who is the Accufer of the Brethren*; and becaufe he is continually de-vifing, and propagating of Mifchief; which is the very Employment of a Fiend.

AND the fatal Succels of this devilifh Artifice is too apparent to be denied, tho' the Damage at the fame Time is hardly to be eftimated. For when once the Bow of a slanderous Tongue is drawn, how far the Arrows will fly, and how deep they will wound, no Body can tell. But where-ever they gain an Entrance, and obtain Credit, they are highly injurious in a double Refpect: *First* to the Perfon fpoken of, by fpoiling him of his good Name, the deareft Thing in the World, except a good Confcience; and that which 'tis feldom in the Slanderer's Thoughts, hardly ever in his Power, to reftore again. And *Secondly* to the Perfon fpoken to, who by being

being too easy of Belief, is led Head-long SERM.  
into an ill-natured Prejudice against his IX.  
Neighbour; and robbed of his Candour,  
and his Charity.

AND as all Infection, the farther it spreads, is the more deadly; so it is with the Poyson of a lying Tongue. And therefore the dispersing, and publishing of scandalous Libels, is a most pestilent Sort of Lying: Because the Slander scatters wider this Way, and rakes deeper, than a little *Ex-tempore* Railing in private Conversation could do; because when 'tis levelled, (as too frequently it is) against Persons of a public Character; the Public itself also suffers, whilst Heart-burnings and Jealousies are stirred up, and Parties and Factions inflamed, to the great Disturbance of the Peace, the Distraction of loyal and well minded Subjects, and the Hazard of the common Safety.

*Fourthly*, THERE is another Sort of Lying very near akin to Slander, and that is Flattery; whose Words though they may seem the smother of the two, yet they are nevertheless deceitful, 'tis well known;

SERM. and in the End, they often prove full as  
IX. bitter, and as stabbing.

THE Method they both make Use of, I reckon, is in a good Measure the same; viz. a false, and disadvantageous Representation of Things, and Persons. For the Flatterer, I believe, represents a Man no less to his Disadvantage, by dawbing him with Praises that he never deserved, than the Slanderer does by loading him with an unjust Accusation; especially where the Flattery is greedily receiv'd, and swallowed; for then it is in a fair Way to make the Man as bad, as even Calumny itself would wish, to have him thought.

IN brief, as the Slanderer allows himself to say all Manner of Evil falsely, in order to blacken, and do Despight to his Enemies: So the Flatterer is ready still to commend as falsely, and as fulsomely, to please and ingratiate with his Patron. And neither of them make any Conscience of what they say, so they can but gain their Point, and impose and deceive.

THUS far therefore they are Brethren at least in Evil! But 'tis farther remarkable, that a Flatterer is a Sycophant, and a  
false



false Accuser by Trade; the very Course S E R M.  
of his Business leads him to it; nay, the IX.  
Success of his best laid Designs often de-  
pends upon it: For his first Point is to  
insinuate into the good Opinion of the  
Person he is practising upon; and this  
he does by swelling him up to a high  
Conceit of himself. His next Point is to  
engross him wholly for his own, with-  
out any Share, or Competition; and this  
is to be done by keeping others at a con-  
venient Distance; especially honest, and  
wise Men, who might go near, 'tis like, to  
undeceive the deluded Self-Admirer, and  
teach him to know himself, and his Friends  
better. To prevent which, the present Pos-  
sessor is forced to bestir himself, to invent  
Stories, to create Suspensions, to forge Crimes,  
and to lay them at any Body's Door, ra-  
ther than they should be suffer'd to come  
near, and break in upon what he knows to  
be his own Property.

BUT without tracing the Alliance of  
these two egregious Lyars, the Slanderers,  
and the Flatterers any farther; it appears,  
I think, that the last of the two has single  
Guilt enough of his own to account for,  
without bearing any Part of the Burden.

SERM.

FOR Flattery is most undeniably a pernicious Practice in these three Respects:

IX.

As *First*, That it puts the grossest, and most dangerous Cheat upon a Man that can be, by giving him a false Notion of himself, and thereby making him a Stranger to his own Soul; and equally so to Humility, and Modesty; and indeed to all Wisdom, and Virtue. And then it passes a second Sham upon him, by presenting the deceitful Kisses, and Applauses of a flattering Mouth, as the Tokens of real Friendship: And *lastly*, to shew how unconscionable an Imposture it is, it makes a Prey of the Wretch after all, and takes large Rewards for its Treachery, and Villany.

AND I shall add no more, to encrease a Guilt that needs no Aggravation; only I must take Notice of one Resemblance more, betwixt it, and its old Ally; and that is, that as Slander impudently flies at Dignity without Distinction, and takes Pride to aim at the highest; so even this sneaking Vice has the Confidence to creep into great Houses, Courts, and Palaces, and delights to lurk there, as a Spy, and a Deceiver; waiting the Opportunity to administer

minister the Poyson, that is so pleasing to SERM.  
a vitiated Palate. IX.

BUT if it can be so happy as to approach  
an ambitious giving Monarch's Throne, or  
his Cabinet; then it is in its proper Pro-  
vince, then it shews the whole Mystery  
of Deceit; it pours out all its sweetest In-  
cense, it draws forth all its richest Colours,  
and lays them on profusely: It changes it-  
self into all Shapes; nay, it changes the  
Names, and fain it would the Nature of  
Things! *calling evil Good, and Good Evil;*  
making burning, and plundering, surpris-  
ing, or buying of Towns, to pass for no-  
ble Achievements; and even Perfidiousness  
itself, a distinguishing Mark of Greatness;  
an Exaltation above the common Rules,  
and Measures of Faith, and Honour.

IN a Word, it deifies the aspiring Mor-  
tal, and idolizes his very Vices; it repre-  
sents him to himself, as the sole Standard  
of all that is truly Heroical; marking all  
his Actions, as such, with the Stamp of his  
own Authority, as if there were no Super-  
ior, to whom he must become accounta-  
ble, or the most high ruled not among the  
Kingdoms of Men.



SERM.

IX.

Prov. xxvi.

28.

AND when a flattering Mouth is arrived to this Impudence, and can dare to instill these Suggestions into a Prince's Ears, as being secure of a favourable Hearing; then, as Solomon says, *It worketh Ruine* to whole Families, Cities, Countries, Continents: Incredible Ruine indeed! were it not that we know where to find the renowned Instance to prove it by: In the mean Time this Digression (if such it be) has more abundantly demonstrated the Perniciousness of this Kind of Lying called Flattery.

*Fifthly*, I MIGHT now proceed, to lay open the Iniquity, and Folly of other Kinds of Lying, that are very familiarly used among us; particularly that which proceeds from a Vanity, or Ostentation, that puts People perpetually upon telling great Stories of themselves, to the End, they may look as considerable in the Eyes of others, as they do in their own. But this Sort of Lying, though it be the Offspring of Pride, and though they who have got the Habit of it, do take Abundance of Pains to cajole others in the Belief of that, which no Body will vouch, but themselves; yet their Cunning for the most Part is too  
flight

flight to be a Covering for their Folly; SERM.  
and consequently the Practice vain, and IX.  
wicked, as it is of itself, is not very hurtful  
to its Neighbours. ~~~~~

THOSE Lyes are of somewhat a worse  
Tendency, and a more dangerous Nature,  
by which People endeavour to conceal their  
Faults. For a Fault concealed by a Lye,  
is at least made double by that wicked  
Artifice. And he that can find in his Heart  
to invent a Lye, on Purpose to palliate his  
Sin, can scarce be in any good Disposition  
to repent him of that Sin; and his having  
so dexterous an Evasion at Hand, will go  
near to harden him in his Impenitence.  
And in the mean Time, he does as long  
as these Shifts will last, deceive, and elude  
the Care, and Inspection of those, who  
are more concerned for him, than he is  
for himself. But he cannot hope to escape  
*thus* long, for a Lye that is accompanied  
with a Sense of more Guilt than its own,  
has commonly an inconstant, and confused  
Look, and is frequently also laid together  
inconsistently; which a discerning Eye will  
soon discover; and the Discovery once  
made, he is quite beaten from his Shel-

SERM. ter, and for the future lies always open  
 IX. to Suspicion. So that this Sort of Lying  
 (though culpable enough in all Reason) is  
 not attended with the like aggravating  
 Circumstances, as are some of the forego-  
 ing. But since it would be endless to pro-  
 secute every several Instance that may be  
 thought of,

*Sixthly, and Lastly,* THERE is one Kind  
 of Lye still behind, which has more Ma-  
 lignity in it, than any of the rest, because  
 it is fatal to Mens Souls, not only to those  
 that make, and love it; but also to those,  
 who suffer themselves to be ensnared by it:  
 I mean a religious Lye (as I may so call  
 it) *i. e.* a Lye concerning Religion, whe-  
 ther for, or against it. In the first Rank,  
*viz.* of such Lyes as are for, *i. e.* pretend-  
 edly for the Advantage of Religion; are  
 your pious Frauds, your legendary Mira-  
 cles, your holy Reliques, and all that false  
 Merchandize, by which the Church of  
*Rome* gains so much to herself, and so lit-  
 tle to *Christianity*. Now all these are as  
 injurious, and in Consequence are as per-  
 nicious, as they are deceitful.

INJURIOUS



INJURIOUS they are to God, and his SERM.  
sacred Truth: For 'tis a dishonourable Re- IX.  
flexion upon that God, who is unchangea-  
ble in Holiness, and infinite in Power, and  
Wisdom, once to imagine, that he should  
be reduced to serve himself of Falshood,  
and Forgery, for the better Confirmation,  
and Propagation of Truth. And 'tis a  
Derogation to the Validity of that mighty  
Truth which has hitherto prevailed, and is  
strong enough to prevail against all Oppo-  
sition, (as being attested by undeniable  
Miracles, and supported by God's faithful  
Promise) I say, 'tis a Derogation to it, and  
an Undermining of it; needlessly to call  
in to its Assistance, the wretched Succour  
of Tricks, and Slights, and lying Won-  
ders.

IN the mean Time, the Prejudice of  
these bold Fictions, let it go how it will,  
is unspeakably great. For where they are  
swallowed without chewing, and pass un-  
discover'd; they do manifestly weaken,  
and endanger the common Faith, by build-  
ing it upon a false Foundation; that won't  
abide the Shock of Argument. But when  
the Cheat is once found out, that renders  
the

SERM. the whole Cause suspected of Imposture,  
 IX. and ministers Occasion of cavilling to the  
 ~~~~~ Sceptic, and helps to harden the Atheist.  
 So preposterous a Thing it is, to lye for
 the Truth, and to rest Religion upon a
 wrong Bottom.

BUT then on the other Hand, the Lyes
 that are framed against Religion, and op-
 posed to the Truth, and Certainty of it;
 are no less fallacious, and to be sure, no
 less pernicious.

FOR shall a Man embolden himself to
 give the Lye to the common Sentiments of
 Mankind, as well as the Misgivings of his
 own Heart; and to deny the Grounds of
 all Religion, the very Being of a God, and
 the necessary Difference between Good,
 and Evil, and the immortal State of Re-
 wards, and Punishments; merely because
 he cannot comprehend all the Mysteries
 in Religion, or because he has known some
 hypocritical Professors, and false Defen-
 ders of it; or for any other pretended Rea-
 son whatsoever?

FOR doubtless, that Man must put an
 egregious Fallacy upon himself, or rather
 offer Violence to his own Sense, that will
 allow

and Falshood consider'd.

315

allow no Weight to all the positive, and SERM.
irrefragable Proofs, even of natural Reli- IX.
gion, because of some Difficulties which
he cannot, or rather does not desire to get
over: And in the mean while he is a very
bold, and impious Seducer, who will pre-
tend to set up for a Teacher, and Propa-
gator of that *Infidelity*, of which 'tis im-
possible to have any Proof, and in which
he can find no reasonable Satisfaction him-
self.

AND 'tis equally false Reasoning, and
unfair Practice, to call in Question the Au-
thority of Scripture, which has all the
Marks of a divine Revelation, both as to
its intrinsic Excellency, and its external E-
vidence; purely upon the Score of certain
groundless Cavils maliciously raised, and
imaginary Inconsistencies artfully improved;
which though they may stagger the Minds
of the unlearned, and the unwary; yet
they can never cast the Scale against all
those cogent, and weighty Reasons, that
are to be produced in Attestation, and
Confirmation of it.

BUT all that Kind of false Reasoning,
is certainly a very imprudent, and a very
malicious

SERM.malicious Sort of Lying; both, because it
 IX. dares to traduce, and even to outface the
 reveal'd Truth of God himself; and be-
 cause it makes Use of this wicked Art, to
 draw others into the Licentiousness of Liv-
 ing, which the Belief of the Scripture
 would not suffer them so easily to comply
 with.

BUT it is still more bold, and impious,
 (if more can be) to pretend to receive the
 Scripture, as of divine Authority, and yet
 to deny the fundamental Truths therein
 contain'd; or to pervert the manifest Sense
 of them by false, and forced Interpreta-
 tions.

• 1 Ep. ii.
 22.

FOR *who is a Lyar* (saith St. *John*,) *but*
he who denieth that Jesus is the Christ? And
 who indeed is he who denieth both Father,
 and Son; but he who endeavours to in-
 validate the plain Testimony of Scripture,
 for the eternal Generation of the Son of
 God, and his essential Divinity; who has
 himself declared, *that he and the Father are*
one; and all this upon the Strength of a
 little Subtlety in Criticism, and sophistical
 Arguing; or perhaps mere idle Conjecture
 or confident Supposition?

AND

AND yet, this has been the great Craft, S E R M.
and Slight, both of antient, and modern IX.
Heretics; whereby they have tossed unsta-
ble Minds to and fro, with the empty
Wind of Doctrine; and have often driven
them, (as one Absurdity must be called in,
to re-enforce another) to take their last mi-
serable Refuge in *Deism*, or downright *A-*
theism.

AND 'tis notorious, that the Injurious-
ness of such lying Sophistry as this, is in-
finitely great, beyond all Valuation, and
Reparation; because, besides the Effron-
tery of changing the Truth of God into a
Lye, by its own corrupt Glosses; it does
moreover industriously deceive, and betray
poor heedless Souls into everlasting Per-
dition.

AND thus I have endeavour'd faithfully
to represent to you the special Guilt, and
Malignity of most, or of the chief of those
several Sorts of Lyes; which frequently
pass up and down, and make much Mis-
chief in the World. And I stop here only,
because I would not be tedious in heaping
Abundance of plain Instances together; not
that any of those Sorts of Lying, which I
have

SERM. have left unmentioned, are therefore to
 IX. pass for innocent; for that none of them
 are, as I shall prove under my next Head
 of Discourse. Only give me leave to
 make this Remark to you, with Respect
 to those already mentioned; (as many of
 them I mean, as may take Place occasio-
 nally in formal Contracts, or solemn Te-
 stimony, which for Distinction Sake, I
 call'd judicial Lyes) I say, that when any
 of them happens so to do, they are then
 attended with greater Aggravations, and
 much worse Consequence, than other-
 wise.

AND the Reason is plain in both Cases;
 for in making of Contracts, (besides the
 general Obligation to Truth and Fidelity
 in all our Entercourses) there is a special
 Stipulation, and a direct Promise interpo-
 sed, and that creates a new Trust; and
 that Trust a new Obligation. And the
 Breach of this Obligation, as it shews the
 Man's Intent to be more villanous, so
 it enhances his Guilt, and (according to the
 Value of the Thing contracted for) adds to
 the Injury too; which in the Falsification
 of a Contract has always this peculiar
 Aggra-

Aggravation, that that which the honest S E R M.
Man builds his Confidence upon, and thinks IX.
his Safeguard; the Knave craftily makes
use of as the surest Way to decoy him.

THUS again in bearing Testimony, the Solemnity of an Oath is superadded, to strengthen what the Witness asserts; and this being an immediate Appeal to God, 'tis the utmost Confirmation that can be given to it: And though it be never so wicked a Lye, it must in Judgment pass for Truth, unless it be notably confronted indeed, or manifestly shewn to be inconsistent, or impossible. And the mischievous Effects of false Testimony are so much the more grievous, and intolerable; because, though it should strike at a Man's Property, good Name, or even Life itself; yet (if he cannot effectually disprove it) he must abide by the Sentence of the Law, and be constrained to suffer the Wrong, the Shame, the Punishment; without Remedy, or Reparation. And the Grievance is still the more insupportable, because Innocence itself, can never be secure, it shall not be oppressed with it: For no Man can foretel, what a profligate Lyar may swear

SERM. 10: No Man can be at all Times prepared

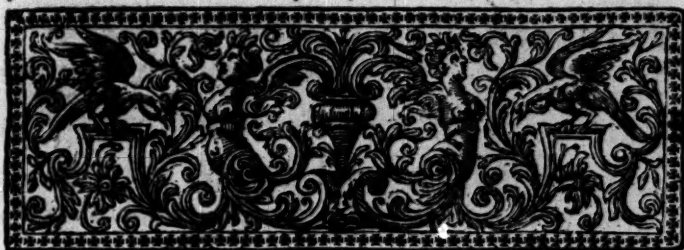
XI. to fence against a slanderous Accusation, or
malicious Prosecution, bolster'd up with
Evidence cunningly laid together, and concerted
aforehand.

THESE therefore, and such Circumstances as these, do apparently load a Lye with the most horrible Guilt, as they arm it, to work the most incurable Mischief.

Now to God the Father, &c.



SERMON



S E R M O N X.

The Nature of Truth and Falshood consider'd.



EPHES. iv. 25.

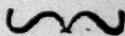
*Wherefore putting away Lying,
speak every Man Truth with his
Neighbour; for we are Members
one of another.*



lity of a Lye.

VOL. II.

N discoursing upon these S E R M.
Words, I propos'd, X.



I. *First*, To enquire in-
to the Nature, and Forma-

Y

II. *Secondly*,

SERM. II. *Secondly*, To lay open the Turpitude,
X. and Baseness of it in General; as also

III. *Thirdly*, THE particular Malignity
of most of the several Sorts of Lyes, that
commonly pass up and down, and make
Mischief in the World.

THESE Particulars I have fully considered. I proceed now,

IV. *Fourthly*, To the general Question,
viz. Whether all Lying be universally unlawful. And if I should determine this Question, without more ado in the Affirmative; I should have the Countenance, and Concurrence of all the modern *Schoolmen*, and *Casuits*, who unanimously follow their great Master St. *Austin*, and condemn it without Exception.

AND they have Reason, they say; for the Scripture itself condemns it, and God abhors it: And besides, a Lye is in its own Nature simply Evil; and *we must* in no wise *do Evil*, even though it were to that End, *that Good might come of it*; and therefore they think, there can be no Room, no Excuse indeed for a Lye, even when it looks most plausible; and might prove most serviceable.

AND

AND so for 'tis Right: for a Lye is per-
petually rank'd in Scripture, with the most
heinous Offences, and threatned with the
severest Punishment; which shews it to be
sufficiently hateful in the Sight of God:
And I do agree also, that it is in its own
Nature morally Evil, and therefore it is not
in any Case to be dispensed with, or ex-
cused. But then it ought to be consider'd,
wherein the Nature of it does really con-
sist, that we may know the better, where
to charge the Evil of it; and this so much
the rather, because a false Notion of a Lye
may be as apt to ensnare Mens Conscien-
ces, as the Lye itself usually is, to impose
upon their Understandings.

AND truly to my Apprehension, the
Schoolmen, and their Followers, with their
abundant Subtlety, seem to overstrain this
Point, and though they decide it right,
they maintain it wrong.

THUS when they place the intrinsic E-
vil of a Lye in its Opposition to the eter-
nal Truth; if by the eternal Truth they
mean God's sacred Truth reveal'd in Scrip-
ture, that's Proof sufficient, that 'tis un-
lawful; and if they will, universally un-
lawful

SERM. lawful, because 'tis universally forbidden;

X. but that alone proves not, whether it was forbidden for its own Sake, or for some other Reason; and therefore 'tis improper to fix the intrinsic Evil of it here.

If by the eternal Truth, they mean, that supereffential Truth which God himself is, it is surely a very incompetent Proof of the moral Evil of a Lye; to say, that it is opposite to something, of a Kind so infinitely different, and distant from it, that there can be no Comparison between them. If by the eternal Truth, they mean the Veracity, and Faithfulness of God, whereby he is always constant to himself, and to his Word; it must be own'd, that 'tis the great Excellency, and Perfection of God, that he can neither deceive, nor be deceiv'd; and on the contrary, that 'tis no small Imperfection in Mankind, that they are but too liable to both: But to alledge, that God cannot lye, and that Men can, and do too often; though it discovers, not only the Imperfection, but the Corruption also of humane Nature; yet it does not directly shew, wherein the moral Evil of Lying must consist.

AGAIN,

AGAIN, if by eternal Truth, they understood that metaphysical Relation, and Agreement that is supposed to be between our Notions of Things, and their real Nature; they are still apparently wide of the Mark: For a Man may speak such a *metaphysical* Truth, and yet in a moral Sense be reputed a Lye at the same Time, if the Truth he spoke was besides his Knowledge, or contrary to his present Sentiments. As on the other Hand, 'tis possible to utter a *metaphysical* Falshood, and yet be a moral honest Man notwithstanding; if so be, he himself was innocently persuaded of the Truth of what he said, and had no secret Design of imposing upon others.

AND since there is no such necessary Connexion, between that which is morally true, and that which is metaphysically so, 'tis evident, that the Immorality of a Lye is not rightly founded on its bare Opposition to *metaphysical* Truth.

WHEN shall we come at the Point then? Shall we say with *Aquinas*, and his Disciples; that a Lye is simply, and necessarily unlawful, as being an Act that falls upon, and is concerned about an undue Matter;

SERM. for Speech being (as it is) the natural Interpreter of the Mind, it is unnatural (says X. he) and that which ought not to be, for a Man to signify that in Words, which at the same Time is far enough from his Thoughts. It is to disturb the Harmony, which is between our two Faculties of Speaking, and Thinking, and to pervert the proper Use of both.

BUT this I doubt is not altogether so solid, as 'tis specious; for though the Faculty of Speech was given us, to express our Thoughts; yet this does not infer an indispensable Necessity of speaking all that we think, or always just as we think; and as little does it imply that 'tis absolutely, and intrinsically Evil, to do otherwise. For if we consider it aright, the principal, and most important End, both of our Reason, and Speech, (as we were designed for sociable Creatures) was to enable us to communicate together; and by that Means, to become useful, and beneficial to each other. And no Question, so far as Truth is conducive to this End, (as for the most Part it is) so far the Obligation to it is necessary, and indispensable.

But

But if (as it sometimes happens) Truth it self should mainly obstruct this very End, which might be come at, though not so directly, by other Means; I say in that Case, it does not so clearly appear, that Men are scrupulously bound to speak only strict, and literal Truth, and that without the least Detriment, either to the Community in General, or any Member in particular; at least it does not appear, that it is so unnatural an Abuse of Speech, as is objected; since it successfully enough pursues the very Design of Nature, which was to serve our mutual Necessities, and Conveniencies; and make Society comfortable to us. And therefore certainly this cannot be supposed to be the Foundation of that intrinsic moral Evil, that is inseparable from Lying.

AND I have thought it convenient once for all, to set aside this, and such like insufficient Reasons as are commonly alledged, because they serve only to breed causeless Scruples, and to perplex a Case, that is otherwise plain enough.

FOR the Short of the Matter is this, the very Nature, and Formality of a Lye is such that take it in what Circumstances

SERM. you will, it must be unlawful; and the

X. Reason of it is notorious: For a Lye (according to the Definition of it) is an Untruth, or a supposed Untruth, (importing a Disagreement between Mens Words, and Thoughts) and accompanied with a Tendency, or Aptness (for the most Part also directed by the Intention of the Speaker) to deceive and injure one's Neighbour. So that 'tis not a naked Untruth, but an Untruth with a Tendency, or Intention to deceive, and by deceiving maliciously to design, or unconcernedly to hazard the doing an Injury to some Body or other: For there is Hurtfulness, as well as Deceitfulness, always imply'd in a Lye. For all Men (without some particular Forfeiture) have a general Right to the common Benefits of Speech, *i.e.* true Information, and useful Communication: And whosoever misapplies that admirable Talent, so as to make it the Engine of Deceit, and Mischief; makes a foul Invasion upon this natural Right, and is therein highly injurious.

A LYE therefore, consider'd in its formal Nature, must be allow'd to be an absolute

solute Evil; for this very Reason, because SERM.
it always supposes a Violation of Right, X.
and a want of that Regard which is always
due to Justice, and Charity, and all Kind
of social Virtues. 

AND allow it once to be unlawful, and
you must allow it to be absolutely, and u-
niversally so; because it can never become
lawful, to invade any Man's undisputed
Right; or to run the wilful Hazard at
least of doing him an undeserved Injury.
And an Injury will always be an Injury,
call it by what mollifying Name you please.
And a Lye as such, is always actually in-
jurious, or fatally fitted so to be, cloath it
in what Circumstances you will; as being
indeed a dangerous Misapplication of Speech,
fruitful of all Manner of Mischief, baneful
to humane Society, and inconsistent with
all our Relations, and Obligations; as
Men; as Citizens, as *Christians*.

AND accordingly, I have endeavour'd to
detect (in the former Part of this Discourse)
the malignant Qualities, and pernicious
Effects of the chief of those several Sorts of
Lyes; that commonly pass up and down,
and make Havock in the World. And I
have

SERM. have found them (all that I have examined)

X. so notoriously guilty, that I may e'en despair, (if I were tied up by the Laws of a perfect Induction) to find any of them innocent.

AND indeed how is it possible? For no good Intention can justify a bad Action, or turn an Injury into a Piece of Justice, or Kindness. Upon which Score it is, that I have formerly disallow'd all pious Frauds, and false Stories of Miracles; because they reflect Dishonour upon God, and his Truth, and unsettle Mens Faith; and this Effect they will naturally have, even though they who vend them, could in Charity be thought to propose never so good an End to themselves.

AND if a good Intention will not avail to the Justification of a Lye, it will be in vain for the Lyar to plead, that he had no ill Design, or perhaps no Design at all in it. For if a Man sets his Toils, though he does not directly drive the Herd into them; yet if any of them happen to straggle that Way, and fall in, he is justly chargeable with the Damage, whether designed, or undesigned. So in like Manner, if a Man
addicts

addicts himself to Lying, out of Levity, SERM.
or Vanity, or mere Inconsideration; tho' X.
he knows not, or considers not the ill Ef-
fects it may possibly produce; yet he is an-
swerable for them, nay for the Possibility
of them. For it is a visible Defect of that
natural Justice, that is due to every Man
in the common Use of Speech, to expose
them even to uncertain Hazard, by our
incautious Discourse; which ought always
to be employed to their Advantage, but
never, if we can help it, to their Detri-
ment, or their Danger. Upon the whole
therefore, a Lye must be own'd to be u-
niversally unlawful, because it is in its
very Nature deceitful, and hurtful; and
that no innocent Thing can be. But then
there is a stricter, and nicer Question be-
hind, and that is,

V. *Fifthly*, WHETHER every Devia-
tion from Truth, does carry the Implica-
tion, and involve Men in the Imputation
of a Lye. But here I cannot so readily
go into the Affirmative, because I just now
obviated some of those improper Reasons,
that might seem to make for it. Besides,
it

SERM. it would be too rash to condemn in the

X. Gross, all witty Fables and Apologues, Parables and Allegories, Ironies, and Hyperboles; all of which have, in the general Vogue of the World, passed for ingenious, and useful Inventions; and most of them have the Usage of Scripture to give them Countenance. And perhaps, there are some other particular Cases so very tender, that they deserve at least to be treated with less Rigour.

THERE is indeed a general Obligation upon us all, to speak simple, and unsophisticated Truth; because Truth is generally the best, and the nearest Way to arrive at the primary Ends of rational Society; and both to impart, and secure the Benefits of it to each other. But what if Truth, through the Perverseness of the Persons concerned, or ill Posture, or Extremity of the Case; should instead of being subservient to these Ends, necessarily frustrate, and destroy them? Must we still be obliged to speak Truth against the true Design of it; and not to recede one Tittle from it, for Fear of incurring the Guilt, and Censure of Lying? I am not averse
from

from thinking, that there may be Room S E R M.
for a more favourable Construction, and **X.**
Reason too.

For though every the least Deviation from Truth, is confessedly a Falshood; yet every Falshood is not injuriously deceitful, which is the noxious Composition of a Lye. And therefore it does not deserve rashly to be called by so ill-favour'd a Name, especially when effectual Care is taken either to prevent the Deceit itself, that might arise from such Falshood, or any possible Injury that might redound from it; but most of all, when by a happy Dexterity, it is adapted to supply the Defects, and answer the Purposes of Truth itself; by usefully instructing, and powerfully persuading those, that could not be otherwise so well wrought upon; by cleverly diverting an imminent Mischief, rescuing an innocent Person, &c.

BUT this will be seen in particular Instances. Let that familiar one, of the usual Method of Parents, in managing Children be the first. There are few I believe, that scruple to allure them to what is good, and to deter them from Evil, by such apposite Fictions, as are most likely

SERM. to make Impression upon them; especially

X. when they find them otherwise untractable. The Reason of which, as *Grotius* thinks, is this; that they have no Capacity to judge of Truth, and consequently they have no Right to it; nor are they wronged in being deprived of it. But as *Puffendorf* judiciously enough remarks, they have certainly a Right to Truth, so far, as that scanty Capacity they have will admit of it: But without all Peradventure they have a Right not to be injured by Falshood.

AND if Truth, and Goodness may be most commodiously convey'd into their weak Minds, under a fabulous Dress, they are deceiv'd indeed, though not to their Prejudice, but Advantage; much by the same Stratagem, that they are tempted to take the Food, or Physic, that is salutary for them; by mingling it with something that is pleasant to the Taste. And he must be a rigid *Casuiſt* indeed, that will pronounce every Parent, an Errant Lyar, for so useful, and innocent an Indulgence to his Child.

IN

IN like Manner, Suppose a Physician, or SERM.
any Friend should so far humour the wild X.
Imagination of a Lunatic, fancying him-
self to be a Prince; as to shew him *Bed-*
lam, and persuade him 'tis his Palace, and
by that Means get him safe lodg'd there,
in order to his Cure; shall this friendly,
and charitable Office pass under the Cha-
racter of a Lye? Surely no! For 'tis evi-
dent in this Case, that Truth itself, had it
been nakedly proposed, would have been
injurious to him, and enraged his Distem-
per; and no Man can have a Right to be
injured, though it be by Truth itself. And
therefore, if he was by a dexterous De-
vice, inveigled into the Place that was fit-
test for him, there was no Wrong done
to any Body; nothing indeed, but what
all his Friends, or those who have any Pi-
ty for him, and even he himself, if he
should recover his Senses, would be thank-
ful for.

AGAIN, there is another Case, though
not very like this, that in *Grotius's* Judg-
ment, will deserve Favour; and that is,
when two Persons are conferring about
Matters, which it imports them to keep
secret;

SE RM. secret; if another should plant himself at

X. the same Time, with an insidious Design
to overhear them; it is lawful (says our
Author) so to frame their Discourse, as
that the other shall collect nothing from
it, but what is quite beside their Meaning.
The Reason assigned for it is this, that
though every Man owes the Debt of Truth
to another, so far as their mutual Com-
merce, and Correspondence may require,
yet no Man is bound to publish his Se-
crets to every Body, that is inquisitive af-
ter them. And on the other Hand, if he
that has no Right to know another's Se-
crets, shall out of an evil Curiosity, endea-
vour to pick them up in the Dark (as it
were) by Stealth; if a Mistake is laid in
his Way in their Stead, there can be no
Wrong done, since there was no Right on
his Part existing; and therefore, if he suf-
fer by that Mistake, he has only himself
to thank for it. But then if we make
Use of this Allowance, we must remember
to take this Caution along with it, that 'tis
unlawful for two Persons to enter into a
Confederacy, on Purpose to entice a third
into a Snare, in which they hope to catch
him,

him for no other End, but to delude him, S E R M.
and expose him. X.

THUS again, in Case a Fire should break out in the Neighbourhood of a Woman lying in Child-bed; 'tis lawful, as well as prudent I reckon, to conceal it from her, and even to possess her to the contrary, if she should apprehend it; 'till the Danger is over. And the plain Reason is, because it concerns her less in her present Condition, to be deprived of the Knowledge of the real Truth, than to avoid the Inconvenience of a sudden Fright: And therefore her Consent might fairly be presumed upon, to part with her Right to the one, rather than suffer under the ill Effects of the other: And they who deal with her upon this Presumption, are so far from being injurious, that 'tis the kindest Office they could do her.

AND as for that famous Instance of an innocent Person furiously pursued, by his Blood thirsty Enemy; I can't but think, that 'tis both lawful, and laudable to misinform, or misdirect the Pursuer. For I cannot divine for my Part, wherein the Wrong should lie; 'tis certain no Man can

SERM. have a Right to be a Murderer; and
 X. therefore he is not wrong'd sure, when he
 is hindred from embruing his Hands in
 Blood; nay, when he is hindred in Part,
 from contracting all that horrible Guilt
 upon himself, which in his Fury he would
 have done. And 'tis absurd to say, that
 'tis an Injury to an innocent Man, to pre-
 serve his Life for him. And therefore I
 can't see, how the Imputation of a Lye
 (whose Nature it is to be injurious) should
 be fastened upon a merciful, and a chari-
 table Untruth; that prevents a more
 grievous Mischief, and confers the most
 valuable Kindness, without interfering with
 any Body's Right, or procuring any Bo-
 dy's Wrong. And we have Examples in
 holy Writ, that look favourably upon this
 Practice.

SUCH was that perhaps of the *Ægyptian*
 Midwives, in their Answer to the merci-
 less *Pharaoh*; though *Aquinas* indeed sets
 it aside, because they had spared the
Hebrew Children before, and then fal-
 sified with *Pharaoh* afterwards, to save
 themselves. But I confess, I can't so clear-
 ly discern, why they should not be per-
 mitted

mitted to shelter their own Lives from SERM.
 the Tyrant's Rage, after they had been X.
 so tender to the Children; and therefore
 this evasive Answer of theirs, ought not (I
 should hope) to be branded for a Lye;
 since though it might be to their own
 Advantage, it cannot be said to be to the
 Detriment of any other Person. And be-
 sides God (as 'tis said in the very next
 Verse) dealt well with the Midwives, there-
 fore for that very Reason; which seems
 to be too direct an Approbation of an Ac-
 tion, liable to the Imputation of a Lye.

BUT to put an End to these Illustrations, *Rahab's* receiving, concealing, and conveying away the Spies; was all a crafty Management, assisted, and carried on by an untrue Suggestion. For she said, *There* Joshua ii.
came Men unto me, but whence they were, 4, 5.
I wist not; and when it was dark, the Men
went out, but whither the Men went, I wot
not; pursue after them quickly, for ye shall
overtake them. And yet she had hid them
 in her House at the same Time. But not-
 withstanding, it would be too bold to charge
 what she said, and did upon this Occa-
 sion, with the Guilt, and Odium of a Lye;

SERM. since the *Apostle* to the *Hebrews*, ascribed

X. it to her lively Faith, without any Abatement made to the Circumstances, and records her Name with Honour: *By Faith Rabab perished not, with them that believed not, when she had receiv'd the Spies in Peace.* I believe it indeed to be a just Observation, that every Thing that seems to be approved in Scripture, is not rashly to be imitated; either because a small Difference may make a great Variation, or because a mixt Action, may be commended for the Good that is in it, without any Notice, or Censure of the Evil; or because extraordinary Cases, are not presently to be drawn into Precedent.

Chap. xi.
31.

BUT I presume, where the Reason of the Thing itself expounds, and justifies the Example, as much as the Example illustrates the Thing; both together, can hardly mislead a Man in his Practice.

AND I take it, it has been sufficiently evinced from the Reason of the Thing, that those Deviations from Truth; in Countenance of which, I have produced the forecited Examples; do by no Means carry the Implication, or involve Men in the

the Imputation of a Lye. For they have none of its ill Intentions, or mischievous Effects: They serve the Convenience, Ease, and Safety of those immediately concerned; but they annoy no Body; they help to prevent many, and great Injuries, but they are never instrumental in doing any. In a Word, they make Way for no Abuses, they introduce no evil Habits, nor do they dispose People to use such a Liberty promiscuously; but only where the Exigence, and Honesty of the Case speaks for itself: And therefore, as far as it appears to me, they are neither liable to the Accusation of Guilt, nor the Suspicion of Inconvenience.

SERM.

X.

BUT I would not be so mistaken, as if I were now apologizing for a Lye; and allowing that Scope to it here, which I had before so rigidly denied to it. For the Practice I have been last speaking of, is of a quite different Hue from a Lye; altho' indeed the very Shadow of a Lye is enough to darken, and discolour the most innocent Action; and this I do imagine, has helped to perplex the present Question. For Men have been wont unaccurately to call every

SERM. Falshood a Lye; and under that Notion,

X. no Wonder, that they have included both
 under the same Sentence: Whereas, if
 People would be at the Pains to distinguish that which is a formal Lye, from that which wants the very essential Property; viz. an injurious Deceitfulness; if they would not disgrace an inoffensive Thing, with a Name of very ill Sound; all Scruples would vanish upon this Head; and every Body would be equally convinced, that as a wilful Lyar may wickedly pervert the Truth itself, and force it to do the vile Office of a Lye; so an honest and ingenuous Man, may happily accommodate a simple Falshood, to the better Purposes of Truth and Justice.

Now to God the Father, &c.

SERMON

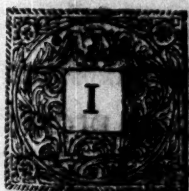


S E R M O N X I.

The Nature of Truth, and Falshood consider'd.

EPHES. iv. 25.

Wherefore putting away Lying, speak every Man Truth with his Neighbour; for we are Members one of another.



IN discoursing upon these Words, S E R M.
the Method I proposed, was X I.

I. *First*, To enquire into the Nature, and Formality of a Lye.

Z 4 II. *Secondly*,

SERM. II. *Secondly*, To lay open the Turpitude, and Baseness of it in General.

~ III. *Thirdly*, THE particular Malignity of most of the several Sorts of Lyes, that commonly pass up and down, and make Mischief in the World.

IV. *Fourthly*, To examine whether all Lying be universally forbidden.

V. *Fifthly*, WHETHER every Deviation from Truth, does involve Men in the Imputation of a Lye, and is to be condemned as such.

THESE Heads of Discourse, I have already considered. It only now remains, that in the

VI. *Sixth* and *Last* Place I do enquire, how far we are bound to keep to exact Truth; and upon a just Occasion to declare it.

AND the Reason why I make a Question of this, is; partly because the general Obligation to Truth, does not immediately imply, that every Deviation from it must needs pass for a Lye; (as I proved by several Instances under my last Head of Discourse) and partly because it is not necessarily incumbent upon us, by Virtue of that

that Obligation, in all Cases, to declare S E R M.
what we know to be true. How far there- XI.
fore we are bound up in these Respects, is W V J
the present Question. And

First, As to the former Part of the Question, namely, how far we are obliged to keep exactly to the Truth, in any of our voluntary Declarations, or Assertions, or in Answer to a legal Examination; it will admit, I think, of this general Resolution; to wit, that we are so far ty'd up to speak the Truth, with all possible Strictness; as the Right, and Interest of our Neighbour is in any Ways concerned in it: But on the other Hand, where no Body's Right is infringed, no Body's Interest prejudiced, (but rather more effectually promoted perhaps, than otherwise it could be) there I suppose we are permitted to use a modest, discreet, and charitable Liberty; such a Liberty as I was pleading for, under my last Head; a Liberty instrumental in doing much Good, but obstructing none; and in preventing much Mischief, but procuring none.

AND they are only such Cases as these, in which Truth is capable of being dispensed

S E R M. pensed with ; that is, wherein there is no
 XI. Right to Truth existing, or at least, where-
 ~~~~~ in that Right is ceased *pro Tempore*.

GIVE me Leave to refresh your Memories, with an additional Instance, or two of this Sort.

SUPPOSE then a Robber, should break a House in the Dead of the Night, and with a Pistol presented to the Head of the Owner, demand of him where the Bulk of his Money and Plate, might be found; he need not scruple sure, if his Presence of Mind will serve him, and it may consist with his Safety; to direct him, where he will meet with the least Booty, and to persuade him if he can, that that's all he is like to find.

AND the Reason is evidently this, the Robber can have no Right, (that's without all Dispute) to carry off another Man's Goods by Violence; and therefore he can have no Right to be truly informed about them, to that End. And 'tis not to be imagined indeed, that he, who contrary to the Laws of all Society forcibly invades the Property of another; should be entitled to the Information of Truth, (which  
 was

was designed only for the better Maintenance of Society) and that in order purely to make his illegal Force, still more injurious; and his unrighteous Gains the greater. In a Word, where there could be no Right, there could be no Wrong; and therefore he that can deceive a Thief in such a Case, may; for he may rest satisfied in this, that he can never wrongfully defraud him. SERM. XI.

SUPPOSE again, a City to be straightly begirt, and sore distressed, for Want both of Succours and Sustenance; I think in that Case, the Casuists always allow a Liberty to amuse the Enemy, with feigned Reports, and false Boasts of their Strength, and Sufficiency, and to make Use of any crafty Stratagem they can devise, that may be of Service, or Relief to themselves; though altogether inconsistent with the Truth. Thus did *Elisha* the Prophet deal with the *Assyrians*, who were smitten with Blindness, that they could not see him, when they were sent to seize him. He took them Captive under Pretence of being a Guide to them. *This is not the Way* 2 Kings vi. 19. (says he) *neither this the City, follow me,* *will*

SERM. *will bring you to the Man whom ye seek, but*  
 XI. *he led them to Samaria.*

~ AND this, and such Practices as this, may be sufficiently justified, 'tis thought, from the very State and Exigency of Things in Time of War. For when People are at open Hostility one with another, they are upon quite different Terms, than when they are mutually engaged in Treaty of Peace, or Alliance. That Trust, and Confidence which was created by solemn Stipulation, in one Case; is actually dissolv'd in the other. The Appeal is now directly to the Sword, and whether that be managed by mere Force, or cunning Slight, it makes no Difference. For certainly a greater Evil cannot be more justified, than a less; and therefore, if it be lawful to kill an Enemy outright, much more is it so to deceive him, though it be to his very great Hurt. For in short, where a Trust is once dissolved, (as between declared Enemies it is) there (so long as their Hostility shall last) the Obligation to perform it, ceases on the one Side; and the Right to expect the Performance of it, ceases likewise on the other. And in this Respect



spect they are both upon the Level, as be-  
ing equally at Liberty to lay hold of any  
Advantage of Arms, or of Art, openly or  
secretly, as it shall happen to present it  
self.

SERM.

XI.

ONLY this is heedfully to be observed;  
that there can be no Room left for any  
such Liberty, when Enemies come to treat,  
and enter into Articles one with another,  
in order to maintain a Truce for a certain  
Time; or to strike up a firm, or settled  
Peace. For there can be no Security, ei-  
ther in a Truce, or a Peace; unless they  
can depend upon one another's Fidelity;  
and the mutual Ratification, and Exchange  
of Articles between them, amounts to the  
most solemn, and public Promise in the  
Face of the whole World; that they will  
each of them for their own Part, most re-  
ligiously observe them. And a Falsifica-  
tion of this Kind, is one of the highest,  
and most shameful Breaches of Trust; be-  
cause it renders the surest Pledges of Faith,  
and Honour, that can pass between Na-  
tion, and Nation, insignificant or insecure;  
and because, if it were once to prevail in  
the World, it would propagate, nay, it  
would

SERMON would perpetuate War and Confusion,  
 XI. without Respite, and without Remedy.

~ AND here, whatever Flattery may say in Praise of it, (as what will not Flattery praise) I must remark it, that 'tis no Part of the *Hero's* Character, to surprize whole Provinces in the Time of profound Peace, to snatch that by Stealth, which he could not wrest by Force; to make a Shew of entering into public Treaties, the better to carry on clancular Designs; to snap asunder all the sacred Bonds of Truth and Fealty; with as much Ease, as *Sampson* broke the Withs from his Arms; and, as if it were his only Boast, that there can be nothing of this Kind strong enough to hold him.

I SAY, this can never pass for the Character of a *Hero*: And History is seldom so immodest, as to represent it so; and Posterity seldom so partial as to think it such.

BUT to return, 'tis only in these Cases, that Truth is dispensable, wherein there is no Body who can claim any just Right to it; no Body that can reasonably complain of Wrong, in being deprived of it.

IN

*and Falshood consider'd.*

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IN all other Cases, where there is any SERM.  
Kind of Right accruing, or any Wrong XI.  
likely to redound; we are undoubtedly ob-  
liged, most strictly to adhere to it.

I SHALL name one or two of the most  
eminent, and those such as constantly oc-  
cur in common Life. And

LET the *First* Instance concern Bar-  
gains and Contracts, and all the Commerce  
maintain'd by Buying and Selling. I say,  
in all Matters of this Nature, we are in-  
dispensably engaged to preserve inviolable  
Truth, in whatever we assert, or pro-  
mise.

FOR all these Matters are transacted be-  
tween such, as are supposed to put a Con-  
fidence in each other, and to deal upon the  
Square together.

AND every Buyer has an indisputable  
Right to receive a good, and valuable Com-  
modity, in Exchange for his Money; and  
to pay no greater Price for that Commo-  
dity, than 'tis really worth, after reasona-  
ble Allowances made, to compensate the  
Skill, the Pains, and the Hazard of the  
Seller.

IN



SERM. IN like Manner, every Seller has an unquestionable Right to receive a rateable Price for his Goods, in true currant Money, and at the Time agreed on; and when once a Bargain is struck betwixt Buyer, and Seller; they are both equally obliged, honestly to fulfil it.

AND any Deviation from Truth, that serves to draw on a Bargain, or to evade or falsify it, when 'tis once made, is a Deceit, and a Lye, and plainly interferes with that common Right, which Men have to be fairly dealt by, in Buying, and Selling.

THUS in particular, if the Seller oils his Tongue with smooth Words, on Purpose to set a fine Gloss upon his Commodity, to make it pass off, for better than it really is, or for more than it can be worth; his Words are all no other than Snares, and the best that can be said of him is; that he is a plausible Cheat.

BUT if any one has a Mind to acquit himself in this Case, like a plain honest Man; he must be sure never to exceed the Bounds of real Truth, in any Thing that he says, either to set off the Goodness of his

his Commodity, or to obtain his Price for S E R M.  
it. For *whatsoever is more than this*, (as XI.  
our Saviour said upon another Occasion) Matt.v.37  
*cometh of Evil.*

THUS again on the other Hand, if one well skilled in antient Coins, and Medals; should light upon some such in the Hands of a Person altogether unacquainted with them; and taking Advantage of his Ignorance, should industriously persuade him, that they are but Copper, when they are Gold, in order to get them into his own Possession upon the easier Terms; I say, such an insidious Buyer as this, is only fit to deal with the Merchants last mentioned: For they are both Cheats, and abound in Words of Deceit, calculated purely for their own Advantage, without any Regard to Right, or Wrong.

AND I reckon of all Things, an honest Man should not make Use of his Skill, to lead an ignorant Person into an Error, that he intends to profit by himself. I should rather think in such a Case, that he would forfeit the Reputation of his Honesty, if he did not first give him faithful Information, even before any Overtures of

SERM. a Bargain; which perhaps also, I may have

XI. occasion to prove upon him by and by.

AGAIN, if a Seller produces a Sample of any Sort of Goods, and promises upon Agreement to deliver a certain Quantity of the same Sort of Goods, according to that Sample; he is bound to fulfil his Promise with all possible Exactness: And if he falls short of it in Respect of Quantity, or Quality; he is liable to make it good, and if he has a Right Sense of Honesty, he will be careful so to do.

FOR I cannot on the sudden decide, who is the most dishonest of the two; he that roundly promises what he intends not to perform, or that he cares not to perform what he was ready enough to promise.

ONCE more, he that makes a Purchase, and by the Conditions of his Bargain, is obliged to pay the whole Price agreed upon, at a certain Time prefix'd; he ought to be punctual to his Time; because otherwise he is not true to his Word, nor faithful to the Person with whom he contracted; unless he fairly asks, and directly obtains his farther Forbearance.

BUT



BUT I need not multiply Particularities; SERM.  
these that I have mentioned are so well XI.  
known, and so very plain that they must  
be sufficient to evince; that in Matters of  
Traffic, and Commerce, 'tis by no Means  
allow'd, to recede from rigid Truth, in a-  
ny of our Assertions, or Promises; and the  
Reason is, because it cannot be done with-  
out the manifest Violation of some Body's  
Right; and consequently it is always ac-  
companied with the Malignity, and Inju-  
riousness of a Lye. But

*Secondly,* THE other Instance I shall  
give, shall relate to that Evidence, or Te-  
stimony which People are ordinarily sum-  
moned to give in, before the Judge, or  
some other public Magistrate; and how  
strictly we are tied up to naked, simple  
Truth on such Occasions, the Tenor of  
the Oath (to that End imposed) as well as  
the Reason of the Thing, will plainly  
shew. For 'tis expressly, and solemnly re-  
quired of us, "That the Evidence we  
give, be the Truth, the whole Truth,  
and nothing but the Truth." And Reason  
good; because the least Aberration, or Fal-  
sification in any of these Particulars, must

SERM. in all Probability prove injurious to some

XI. Body or other; and there is but too much  
 Cause for Suspicion, that it is generally designed so to be.

WE are required to speak the Truth, upon these Occasions; that is, what to the best of our Knowledge, and Recollection, we impartially judge so to be; because otherwise we shall point blank *bear false Witness against our Neighbour*; either by deposing that concerning him, which we know, or think to be false, or at least do not know to be true; both which, may be of infinite ill Consequence to him, and expose him perhaps to that Expence, Loss, Shame, or Punishment which he never deserved.

AN Injury of that Size, that no Man that makes any Conscience of what he says, or does, can ever be guilty of.

BUT 'tis not sufficient, barely to depose the Truth, unless we faithfully relate the whole of it; all that falls within the Compass of our Knowledge, and concerns the Matter in Question. For the mincing, and softening the Evidence, or the Concealment of some material Circumstance, frequently gives a Turn to the whole Cause,

Cause, at least it is too apt to put a wrong SERM.  
Byass upon the Judgment of the Jurors; XI.

who are not always the most discerning, but too often inclinable to shew unconscionable Favours. The Suppression of any Part of the Truth therefore, may hazard to confound Guilt and Innocence, and pervert Right and Wrong, as much as an Evidence directly false: And therefore 'tis every Whitt as injurious. And indeed, when a Man is charged upon Oath to deliver the whole Truth, he is no better than a false perjured Wretch, if he studiously conceals any Particular within his Knowledge.

BUT moreover, it lies upon our Consciences, not to err in the Excess, any more than in the Defect: For we are to speak the whole Truth, but nothing beside the Truth, nothing beyond our Knowledge; we are not to set it off, with any Additions, or Amplifications of our own: No circumstantial Dress, colourably put on, to make the Matter of Fact look better or worse, than nakedly it would. For such Artifices as these, are certainly designed for a Blind: And the ill Influence,



SERM. that they have upon the Cause depending, is not always to be prevented; but to be sure, the Corruptness, and Falseness of *their* Hearts that use them is never to be excused.

AND this may suffice to shew, that we are under the most indispensable Obligation, to keep close to simple, undisguised, and uncorrupted Truth, in every Thing we depose, in the Way of Evidence; because we cannot turn aside, either to the right Hand, or to the left, without intrenching upon Justice, Equity, or Charity.

I DON'T here take Notice of the Interposition of an Oath, which is indeed a great Aggravation to the Crime of false Witnessing; but I am now taxing it as a Species of Lying only, and in that Respect I find it to be utterly inexcusable.

AND what shall we say, or think then, of those sworn Enemies to all Truth, and Honesty; Enemies indeed to every Man's Property, Peace, and Safety; the Suborners, and Instructors, I mean of false Witness; they that train them up to their Hands, that pay them the Wages of Unrighteousness,

righteousness, and have them always at their Beck whenever their devilish Malice, or Avarice shall prompt them to ruine the innocent, or unwary? These are the *Makers, and the Lovers of Lyes*: They trade in them, they rob, and murder by them; and it is so much their wicked Inclination, and their Business; that they might almost dispute the Title of the Father of Lyes, even with the Devil himself; at least none of his Children can come nearer him, in Resemblance, or Imitation.

ANOTHER Sett of Men there is in the World, who though they are not arrived to that same prodigious Pitch, or Degree of Wickedness, with those last mentioned; yet they have but too many false, and foul Practices to answer for; the Make-baits, I mean; they whose Study, and Employment it is, -o sow the Seeds of Contention every where, that they may never want a Harvest themselves; they that are ready to espouse any Quarrel, and hug it as their own, and make it so, rather than fail; and carry it on by all Kind of little Crafts, and sinister Arts; especially by tampering with simple, ignorant Men, (who are to

SERM. be made Witnesses of) by straining their

XI. Words, beyond the natural Sense, and the  
 ~~~~~ Intention of those that spoke them; and  
 thence framing a plausible Story, and fitting it to their Mouths, and inculcating it so often upon their Ears, 'till at last they get it by Heart, perhaps believe it, but to be sure fail not to attest it.

THESE Kind of Practicers are they, whose Name is odious, and infamous in the Eye of our Law, as being the Invaders of every one's Right and Quiet, and the very Pests of Society. And the honourable Profession of the long Robe justly disowns all Relation to them, and is at all Times glad to see them publicly stigmatiz'd.

AND indeed the Law, being so careful as it is of Property, and so tender of the Subjects Good; could not but hold such villanous Practices in the utmost Detestation.

NAY, I must farther suppose, that as the End of the Law, is to deal equal Justice to all; so it could never intend to commit Errors in the Distribution of Justice; and consequently it could never approve,

prove, or willingly admit of any fly Shifts, SERM.
or Evasions; any cunning Fetches, or De- XI.
vices, whereby to delay, obstruct, or per-
vert Judgment. And whensoever any Thing
like this happens, (as Abuses will creep in-
to all humane Institutions) it must be per-
fectly beside the Intention of the Law; be-
cause it is absurd to think, that it could
be founded upon Wrong, or fashioned for
Deceit.

SOME of its Forms indeed, do not al-
ways consist of strict, and literal Truth;
but then they are mere Forms, which
mislead no Body's Understanding, nor do
they affect the Merits of the Cause; 'tis
that which appears upon the Proof only,
that is of Moment towards a Decision of
the Matter in Issue; And therefore these
Forms, though they may contain some-
thing untrue, yet they imply nothing that
is deceitful, or injurious; and consequently
they are without the Venome (I presume)
of a malicious Lye.

BUT I remember the Fate of the *Ora-*
tor, who would needs talk of military Af-
fairs before *Hannibal*; and therefore I
shall wade no farther in this Argument:
Nor

SERM. Nor shall I pretend nicely to examine,

XI.  whether 'tis lawful for Pleaders, to undertake the Defence of a bad Cause, or to use any Kind of artificial Colours, Extenuations, Exaggerations, sophistical Reasonings, or the like; or whether, they ought to confine themselves only, to enquire into the Truth of the Fact, from the Mouth of the Witness; and after that, impartially to compare it, as it stands in Proof, with the Law; that so those concerned, may better judge of its Quality, and Deserts.

INSTEAD of examining farther into this Case, I shall only remind you, that that which makes a Fallacy maliciously fraudulent, is its Injuriousness; and that we are so far confined to strict, and simple Truth, as the Right of our Neighbour is any Ways concerned in it, or the Deviation from it may turn to his Prejudice: And how near that comes to the present Case, 'tis not difficult to discern.

Secondly, IT remains now, that I proceed to the second Part of the general Question, *viz.* How far we are bound to declare, what we know to be true.

BUT

BUT the fewer Words will suffice for SERM.
this; because the same general Resolution XI.
will serve again, and most of the same
particular Instances will suit well enough
too.

FOR I believe none will dispute, but we
are so far bound to declare the Truth, and
all we know of it, as our Neighbour's
Right may be interested in it; and the
Concealment of it may prove prejudicial to
him.

ON the contrary, where there can be no
Pretence of Right on his Part, nor no Fear
of suffering any Wrong for want of being
duly informed; there I think we are left
at a discretionary Liberty, to suppress the
Truth, or any Part of it, as Prudence may
seem to advise, or Charity, and Justice
require.

THUS, In the Instance formerly men-
tioned; the conscientious Tradesman is ob-
liged (as I take it) not to conceal any De-
fect in the Commodity he sells, or else to
make a proportionable Abatement for it
in the Price; because every Buyer has an
undoubted Right to have that which is
good for his Money, and not to pay more
for

SERM. for it than it is worth; and therefore an
 XI. industrious Concealment in this Case, is
 no better than a designed Cheat.

AND upon this Occasion, I cannot forbear the Mention of a famous Case in *Tully's* Offices. The Question is; "If a Corn Merchant sails from *Alexandria* to *Rhodes*, in Time of great Scarcity, and Famine; and knows at the same Time, that there are a considerable Number of Ships with Corn in their Passage thither; shall he conceal it in order to enhance his own Price; or shall he not?"

"No, if *Cicero* be any Casuist, by no Means! his very Silence in that Case, shall not be innocent; because 'tis industriously to conceal that, which he knows himself; from those, whom it nearly concerns to know it too; purely for a little sordid *Lucre's* Sake.

AND our Author, not content barely to decide the Question against the crafty Merchant, expresses his Indignation against the Man, and his Practice*.

* Hoc autem celandi Genus quale sit, & cujus Nominis, quis non videt? Certe non aperti, non simplici.

THAT in short, 'tis a knavish Con-
cealment, he says, and he bestows all the
ill Names upon him that practises it, that
he can think of on the sudden.

SERM.

XI.

If any one shall object, that this is too
rigid to assert in Doctrine, and too unrea-
sonable to require in Practice; I must
leave the false-hearted *Christian* to dispute
the Point, (if he will) with the honest
Heathen; and to give better Reasons for it
(if he can) than he has done against it.

IN the mean Time, I can but pass the
same Judgment ('till I be better satisfied)
upon the designing Purchaser of the Me-
dals above mentioned. For unless he first
plainly informs the Owner of them, what
they are, and what Value the Curious ge-
nerally put upon them; and then tells
him he will give as much for them, as an-
other Man shall; I say, if he does not
make this Discovery to him first; it is e-
vident, he must have an underhand De-

genui, non justii, non viri Boni: Versuti potius, obscuro, a-
nuti, fallacis, maliciosi, callidi, veteratoris, vafri. L. 3.
Officior. Vol. X. Edit. Gronov. 12°. p. 4059.

sign,

2

SE RM. sign, of getting them from him for little
 XI. or nothing; *i. e.* in plain Terms, of cheat-
 ing him of his just Due.

I HAVE already in the Course of my Argument, had Occasion to observe; that the stifling any Part of the Truth in a legal Evidence, (where the Tenor of the Oath, as well as the Nature of the Thing, obliges us to declare the whole) is as perfidious, and often as injurious, as downright Falshood or Forgery.

I SHALL only add upon this Head; that all Equivocations, and mental Reservations, upon Examinations had before a lawful Magistrate, are utterly to be condemned; because they are invented on Purpose, maliciously to suppress the Truth, and detain that from those, who are legally impower'd to take Cognisance of it: They mock all their Vigilance; they vacate the most engaging Promises; they elude the strictest Laws, they loosen the sacred Bonds of Oaths; and in a Word, they undermine the Peace, and Safety of all Governments.

THIS notorious therefore, that the Suppression of the Truth, by such collusive Means, is justly chargeable with all the vilest

vilest Qualities, and worst Effects of a SERM.
Lye; and when People insidiously lie in XI.
Wait to deceive, it is an indifferent Thing, ~~~~~
whether they compass their End by Falsities and Fictions, or a confident Denial of the Truth; or by studied Ambiguities, and latent Reserves, contrived only to reconcile two Things that are incompatible; i. e. Truth and Falshood.

GIVE me leave to put an End to these Examples, with but one more that concerns Religion; and that is, in Case God should in his good Providence, call us to witness the Confession of a true Faith, in Times of Trial, and Persecution; without all Peradventure, in that Case we are obliged to do it, with all Frankness, and Openness; or without any Colour, or Concealment whatsoever.

IN Justice to the Truth, and in Honour to God, we ought to do it, and we are shameful Revolters if we do not; *For with the Heart, Man believeth unto Righteousness, and with the Mouth, Confession is made unto Salvation*; this is the proper Way of bearing Testimony, to the Truth of our holy Religion, when we are put to the Question;

SERM. Question; and whosoever is ashamed to
 XI. own it; *of him also shall the Son of Man be*
 ~~~~~ *ashamed, when he cometh in his Glory*; be-  
 cause, besides the Treachery of his own  
 Heart, he lays a stumbling Block in the  
 Way of the Weak, and tempts the timo-  
 rous to the like *Apostasy* with himself.  
 For the *Libellatici* of old, who were wil-  
 ling to have it thought that they denied  
*Christ*, though they really did not; were  
 censured as downright *Apostates*, by the  
 zealous Fathers of the Church.

AND People are under the same Obliga-  
 tion, to render a fair, and candid Account  
 of their Faith (if required to't by their Su-  
 periors) when they have given Scandal to  
 the Church of God, by the Suspicion of  
*Heresy*. And this they are bound to do,  
 with all Simplicity, and Plainness; not dis-  
 guising their Errors under any Likeness of  
 Sound, or equivocal Expression; which  
 was the disingenuous Artifice of the *Ar-*  
*rians* in former Days, whereby they mock-  
 ed all the provident Care, and Zeal of  
 their Governors, and silyly instilled their  
*heretical* Opinions, into the Minds of many,  
 that were honest, and undesigning.

BUT

**BUT** to draw to a Period; the plain SERM.  
Result of all the aforementioned Instances, **XI.**

is this; that wheresoever our Duty towards God, or (as it most commonly happens) to our Neighbour, may exact it from us; there we are obliged to an explicate Declaration of the Truth, so far forth as any Body has a manifest Interest in it, or can make out a just Claim to it.

**BUT** on the contrary, where there is no Body interested in it, no Body entitled to it; it cannot be wrong to withhold it, and to blab it, possibly it may.

'Tis too late to prove this now by fresh Instances; and in so clear a Point, these few Hints may suffice.

No Man, as I take it, is obliged to divulge his own Secrets, to every inquisitive, busy Body: For Curiosity alone can create no Right; and therefore not to gratify it is no Wrong.

**AGAIN**, no Man is obliged to give a direct Answer to an ensnaring Question; for Malice, and Treachery can create no Right; and for an honest Man not to betray himself, is no Wrong sure to his insidious Neighbour.



SERM. AGAIN, no Man is bound to expose his

XI. own secret Infirmities to the World; for  
 no Body is bound to bring Contempt upon himself; and who is it, that can pretend to claim it from him? *Lastly*, no Man is bound to publish every Trip, or Failing of his Neighbour; especially when there is Hope of his Amendment: For what Obligation can there be for any Man to be uncharitable? In these Cases therefore, and such like Cases as these are, the Concealment of Truth is so far from being injurious, that it would be rash and foolish, and oftentimes mischievous to declare it.

AND now to conclude all, let us listen to the *Apostle's* Exhortation, and *put away Lying*: For a Lye is the Offspring of the Devil, and an Abomination to God; 'tis put into the Catalogue, with the most heinous Sins, that the Scripture takes any Notice of; and included in the same Sentence with them. 'Tis fruitful of Abundance of Mischief, and destructive, both of the Obligations, and Ends of all Society. In a Word, it is in its very Nature deceitful, and hurtful, or at least fatally fitted so to be; and therefore all Manner of Lying is most certainly unlawful. AND

AND though every Deviation from SERM.  
Truth has not always the Formality of a XI.  
Lye, because sometimes a simple Falshood  
may be better accommodated to the better  
Purposes of Truth, and Justice, and Charity;  
and the very Deceit itself may help to pre-  
vent the Injury; I say, notwithstanding this,  
let us still hold ourselves obliged, to ad-  
here religiously to the Truth, wherever  
the Right or Interest of our Neighbour  
may be in any wise concerned in it. For  
'tis certain, there can be no Dispensation  
to defraud any Man of his just Right, in  
any Case whatsoever. And again, though  
it is not in all Cases required of us to im-  
part to others all that we know to be true  
ourselves; yet still where it affects any Bo-  
dy's Right, or Interest, let us think it (as  
it is) our Duty so to do; and let us upon  
a just Occasion, be ready to do it freely,  
and fairly; without any Kind of artificial  
Disguise, or sly Evasion.

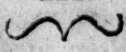
IN a Word, let us all remember that *we*  
*are Members one of another*, and that (as  
such) we have in all ordinary Cases, a  
common Right to Truth; and in those ex-  
cepted Cases, where it may be lawful and

SERM. useful to recede from it, or in any Degree

XI. to suppress, or conceal it; it lies upon us  
 still to be extremely tender of interfering  
 with any Body's Right, or doing the least  
 Wrong; for though every Untruth does  
 not immediately deserve the Name of a  
 Lye; much less every Concealment of the  
 Truth; yet whenever the one, or the other  
 apparently is, or is likely to prove injuri-  
 ous, then it puts on the Nature, and Qua-  
 lity of a Lye; and as such must scrupu-  
 lously be avoided.

BUT I hope I need not spend many  
 Words in pressing a Point, that carries its  
 own Conviction with it. For the World  
 (bad as it is) is not so profligate, as to  
 entertain any good Opinion of Lying:  
 And few Parents (I believe) or Masters of  
 Families, think it to be a laudable, or in-  
 deed an excusable Thing in their Children,  
 or Domesticks. They are too sensible, that  
 it betokens the greatest Baseness, and Dis-  
 ingenuity; that it destroys the very Princi-  
 ples of all Honesty, and confounds the  
 Difference of Right, and Wrong; that it  
 undermines the very Foundation of all  
 Trust, and Confidence. In a Word, that  
 the



the customary Habit of it disposes People S E R M.  
by Degrees to do any the vilest Action, or **XI.**  
commit any the most detestable Villany. 

I may take it for granted therefore, that every Man is willing to have so pernicious a Practice discountenanced in his own Family, for fear of being encompassed about with Lyars; *i. e.* with Tale-bearers and Slanderers, Parasites and Sycophants, Cheats and Thieves, Traitors and Villains; for a thorough-paced Lyar, as the Scene shifts, is ready to act his Part in all these Capacities. And doubtless, it is as much (and more) every one's Interest and Duty to disapprove, censure, and punish all Lying without Doors, as well as within: In Regard a City, or Nation full of such Lyars; must be abundantly worse than a House full. And indeed, when once this Pestilence of the Tongue becomes *epidemical*, (as God knows 'tis but too much so) no Man can promise himself any Security in his good Name, Estate, or any Thing that he enjoys; or any Quiet in the Neighbourhood where he lives, or any Comfort in his own Innocence; for all is still at the Lyar's Mercy; *whose Mouth is full of Cursing, and*  
B b 3 *Bitterness;*

SERM. *Bitterness, Deceit and Fraud, Mischief and*

XI. *Vanity; whose Throat is an open Sepulchre,*  
 Rom. iii. *whose inward Parts are very Wickedness,*  
 13, 14, *whose Feet are swift to shed Blood; and in*  
 15, 16. *all whose Ways are Misery and Destruction.*

And 'tis an Evil, that we have of late much groaned under; an Evil (to our Shame be it spoken) that is almost become national among us. Time was, when we did pretend to something of Character, and Figure in the World, to be a People of Honour, and Integrity. But whatever we have been, we are now ('tis too notorious to be denied) for ought I know, the most of any People in *Christendom*, addicted to lye to one another, and of one another; we make Lyes, and we love Lyes, and we abound in them of all Sorts and Sizes, and fitted to all Ends, and Purposes; we use them as Weapons of Defence, and Offence; to support, and advance our-selves, or to supplant, and overthrow those, whom we hate or envy; and we level them, not only at particular Persons, but at whole Orders, and Professions, at considerable Bodies and Societies of Men; we spare no Dignity, no Innocence, no Authority, be

it never so high, or sacred; and confident, SERM.  
and shameless Lying is the universal En- XI.  
gine, to batter down all that stands be- ~  
fore it.

'Tis *a fore Evil under the Sun* this; and oh! that we could find an effectual Remedy for it? Oh that Men would be persuaded for their own Sakes, never to indulge a Lye in themselves or others, in Jest or Earnest, in a great Matter or a little! For the Practice of it in Jest, will be but too apt to introduce the Habit in good Earnest; and the Indulgence of it in a small Matter, will in Time make a Breach in the Conscience, wide enough for the greatest Sin to find its Entrance at.

Oh therefore, that Men would suffer themselves to be made sensible, that they are supposed by the Tenor of their baptismal Vow, to have *put off the old Man with his Deeds*, of which this is one of the most notorious; and to have renounced the Devil, and all his Works; of which this is the most properly diabolical; then one would imagine they would not be difficult to be persuaded to follow the *Apostle's* excellent Advice in the Text; of *putting away Lying, and*



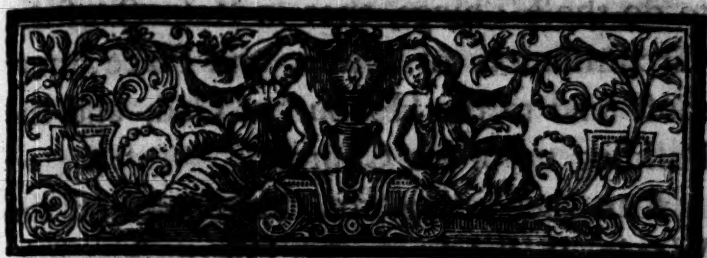
SERM. *speaking every Man Truth with his Neigh-*

XI. *bour. Which that we may all of us do,*

God of his infinite Mercy grant, in and through *Jesus Christ* our Lord; to whom with the Father and Holy Spirit be ascribed (as is due) all Praise, Glory, Might, Majesty, and Dominion, now and for ever. *Amen.*

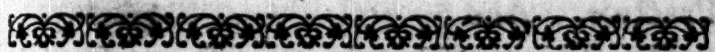


SERMON



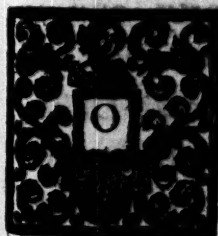
# SERMON XII.

The Nature of Godly Zeal consider'd.



ROM. xii. latter Part of the 11<sup>th</sup> Verse.

*Fervent in Spirit, serving the Lord.*



OUR learned Paraphrast up-SERMON on the New Testament XII.

\* understands these Words <sup>Dr. Hammond.</sup> of St. Paul, of that earnest

est Degree of Affection to God's Service, that will inflame, and set us most ardently about it, and prompt us

to

SERM. to do those Things, that in Respect of the  
 XII. Circumstances of Time, and Place, may  
 ~~~~~ most tend to the Honour of God, and the  
 Building up of his Church.

AND according to this Sense of the
 Words, shall I frame my Discourse at pre-
 sent, and endeavour,

I. *First*, To represent to you, the Na-
 ture, and Qualifications of a godly Zeal, or
 a Fervour in God's Service.

II. *Secondly*, To recommend it to your
 Practice. And

III. *Thirdly*, To give you some special
 Directions for the more laudable Exercise
 of it. And

I. *First*, THE better to acquaint you
 with the Nature of godly Zeal, give me
 leave to set it before you under this De-
 scription; *viz.* that it is a hearty, and an
 affectionate Concern for the Service, and
 Honour of God, and an earnest Desire,
 and Study to promote it; upon good
 Grounds, by lawful, prudent, and proper
 Methods, and in such Manner as is de-
 cent and fitting.

WHICH

WHICH Description, if I misapprehend SERM.
 it not, will help us in a great Measure to XII.
 conceive what it is that constitutes the
 very Essence of Zeal; what its inseparable
 Properties are, or ought to be; and where-
 in it stands plainly differenced, both from
 the direct Opposites to it, and the indirect
 Abuses of it.

AND this I imagine will be evident e-
 nough to any Body, that has the Patience
 to attend to it, and examine it. For first
 to satisfy your Enquiry, about the ge-
 neral Nature, and Notion of it; it is ac-
 cording to the Description given, a Concern
 for the Service, and Honour of God, together
 with a Desire, and Study to promote it: A
 Concern, that is a solicitous Care for, and a
 particular Regard to it, habitually rooted
 in the Mind, and springing from the full
 bent of the Inclinations; and expressing,
 and exerting itself in several Acts suitable
 to the several Occasions, that may present
 themselves. For Zeal is not purely a sud-
 den *Impetus*, or Start in Devotion, a fever-
 ish hot Fit of Religion, that is owing to
 some extraordinary Ferment, or Commotion:
 But 'tis a serious, steddy, religious
 Principle,

SERM. Principle, that is as coolly, and deliberately taken up, as 'tis warmly, and resolutely pursued. And it is particularly distinguished, both by the Object, that it is conversant about, and the End at which it aims: The Object is the Honour, and Service of God; the End is the Promotion, and Advancement of the same. The Object sanctifies the Principle, and makes it properly a Principle, or Habit of Religion; and the End, whilst constantly kept in View, influences, and determines the Practice, and makes it properly an Act, or Exercise of Religion.

If it be employ'd about any other Object besides God's Honour and Service, it is no longer godly Zeal, but commences Vanity or Folly, Superstition or Will-worship, and does indeed defeat the End, it would pretend to aim at; prophaning God's Honour, and alienating it from him, instead of advancing it. And if it be levelled at any other End besides the Promotion of God's Honour, it therein betrays itself, and apparently proceeds from a wrong Principle; not from any real Concern for God, or Religion, but from some corrupt Lust, and Affection,

some

Godly Zeal consider'd.

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some carnal Reason, some secular Interest, S E R M.
or Motive. And therefore. **XII.**

Secondly, It is to be observed too into the Description of Zeal, that it is a hearty and affectionate Concern for God's Honour, and Service. For doubtless true Zeal ought to be accompanied with Sincerity of Heart, as well as Vehemency, and Ardour of Affection; otherwise it deserves not so commendable a Name; for without a sincere, honest Intention, it is no better than hypocritical Pretence, and the base Counterfeit of an excellent Virtue.

Jehu is a famous Instance of this pretended Zeal. *Come with me*, (said he to *Jehonadab*) *and see my Zeal for the Lord*; 2 Kings x. 16. as a Proof of which, he by Stratagem circumvented the Priests, and Worshippers of *Baal*; and destroy'd them, and their Idol out of *Israel*. But yet 'tis manifest, he was not so zealous for the Lord, as he made Shew of, *to walk in the Law of the* Ver. 31. *Lord God of Israel, with all his Heart; neither departed he from the Sin of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin.* Out of Popularity indeed, he demolished the Image

SERM. mage, and Temple of *Baal*; but in the
 XII. Falseness of his Heart, he fell down at the
 same Time, and worshipped the golden
 Calves, and both countenanced, and pra-
 ctised the same Idolatry, though in ano-
 ther Shape.

AND the *Pharisees* in our Saviour's Days,
 stand branded upon Record, for just such
 Kind of hypocritical Zealots. They loved
 to sound a Trumpet before their Alms, and
 to stand Praying in the Synagogues, and in
 the Streets, that they might be seen of Men.
 Thus did their Zeal evaporate into vain
 Glory. They could devour Widows Houses, and
 for a Pretence make long Prayers. Thus was
 their Zeal made a Cloak to their Knavery,
 and Extortion. They could hale the Wo-
 man, that was taken in the Act of Adultery,
 before the blessed *Jesus*, as if the Spirit of
Phinehas had been upon them; and they
 could not have endured such Wickedness
 to go one Moment unpunish'd. But the
 Evangelist tells us; *this they did to tempt*
him, that they might have something to ac-
cuse him of, so much more was their In-
 dignation against the Innocent, than the
 Guilty. And their false Zeal, was em-
 ploy'd

John viii.
 6.

ploy'd only to be the more dexterous Instrument of their Malice, and Perfidiousness. S E R M.
XII.

I PRODUCE these Instances, (as I might many more) only to shew, that Sincerity of Heart, is an Essential Ingredient in godly Zeal; which if you once separate from it, its Beauty, and Excellency are quite lost, and it is but the painted Vice of Hypocrisy, under a specious Name, and sanctified Appearance.

Thirdly, BUT moreover, it belongs to the Nature of Zeal, not only to be sincerely, and heartily, but to be very tenderly, and affectionately concerned for the Honour, and Service of God; *to be fervent in Spirit serving the Lord*; as the Text expresseth it. And this Fervour is in Truth, the very distinguishing Property of Zeal, whereby it stands opposed to a total Unconcernedness, or a lukewarm Indifference about religious Matters. Which latter is what the Church of *Laodicea* in particular is tax'd with by St. *John*, and 'tis a Temper that he represents as odious, and loathsome as it were to God, for so the Spirit had directed him to write; *because*

SERM. *cause thou art lukewarm; and neither hot*
 XII. *nor cold, I will spue thee out of my Mouth.*

Rev. iii.

16.

Ver. 19.

In Opposition to which, it is added presently after: *Be zealous therefore, and repent.* Zeal therefore, according to its very Composition, is animated, and acted by a warm, and vigorous Affection. But 'tis a mixed Affection, consisting of several simple Passions, each of them occasionally exercised, according as the Object is differently view'd, or apprehended; and all of them conspiring to the same End; to wit the Furtherance of God's Glory, and his true Religion. The radical Passion and that which enkindles, and furnishes Fuel to all the rest, is the ardent Love of God; and this naturally excites a vehement Desire, and singular Delight to please him, and bring Honour to his holy Name; by devoting ourselves more peculiarly to his Service, by a constant Attendance upon his Ordinances, by a circumspect, and unblameable Conversation, and by the shining Light of a good Example; that may provoke others with a pious Emulation to glorify God as we do. Such was the Operation of holy *David's* Zeal, he loved the

Godly Zeal consider'd.

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the Salvation of the Lord; and therefore S E R M.
was disposed himself, and was prompting **XII.**
others continually to say, *Let the Lord be* Pf. xl. 16.
magnified. The very Desire of his Soul (as
Isaiab expresses it) *was to the Name of* Chap. xxvi. 8;
the Lord, and to the Remembrance of it.
And he himself expresses the Earnestness,
and Ardor, both of his Love, and Desire
in these lively Words: *How amiable are* Pf. lxxxiv.
thy Tabernacles, thou Lord of Hosts; My Soul 1, 2, 10,
longeth, yea even fainteth for the Courts of
the Lord: My Heart, and my Flesh crieth
out for the living God. For a Day in thy
Courts is better than a Thousand: I had ra-
ther be a Door-Keeper, in the House of my
God, than to dwell in the Tents of Wicked-
ness. And in another Place he cries out:
I have longed after thy Precepts; and my Pf. cxix]
Delight is in thy Law, and in thy Testimo- 40.
nies.

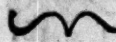
AND thus zealously was he affected in
Behalf of others, as well as himself. So
it appears from the 122^d Psalm; where he
testifies his Joy for the publick, and peace-
able Opportunity of worshipping God, and
the Readiness of the People to join with
him in it: *I was glad* (says he) *when they*

VOL. II.

C c

said

SERM. *said unto me, let us go into the House of the*

XII. *Lord; our Feet shall stand within thy Gates,*
 *O Jerusalem! And then he adds his fervent Prayers and Vows, his utmost Endeavours for the future Establishment of*
 y 8, 9. *God's Church. For my Brethren, and Companions Sake, I will now say, Peace be within thee; because of the House of the Lord our God, I will seek thy Good.*

AND to shew how regardful and desirous he was of the Salvation of others, as well as that of his own Soul, he sues out his own Pardon in the 51st Psalm, upon
 y 12, 13. *this very Condition; and binds himself by a Vow to be an Instrument in the Conversion of other Sinners. Restore unto me the Joy of thy Salvation (says he) and uphold me with thy free Spirit; then will I teach Transgressors thy Ways, and Sinners shall be converted unto thee.*

AND this zealous Love of God, which enflames the pious Soul, with such a vehement Desire to promote his Honour; and affords such a sensible Joy, and so great a Complacency in being happily instrumental towards it; is no less apt to conceive a just Indignation, and to be
 touched

touch'd with Grief, Hatred, and Abhor-
rence, when provoked thereunto by the
grievous Profanation of God's holy Name,
by the continual Increase of daily Impi-
ety, or the obstinate Opposition that is
made against all Endeavours for a Refor-
mation.

SERM.
XII.

THUS was *David* again heated with ho-
ly Indignation, when he breaks out into
that pathetic Complaint: *My Zeal bath* Pf. cxix.
consumed me, because mine Enemies have ^{139.}
forgotten thy Words. Heavily displeased,
and highly incensed he was; not so much
at the Malice, as at the Folly, and Wick-
edness of his Enemies; that they should
disobey God's heavenly Will, and neglect
their plain Duty founded upon natural Ju-
stice, and Equity.

It was under the like Provocation, and
with the same Resentments, that the holy
Jesus drove the profane Crew of Buyers,
and Sellers, and Money-Changers out of
the Temple. And his Disciples understood
it to be as it was, the Effect of his extra-
ordinary Zeal, and therefore they readily
apply'd that propheticall Passage in the

SERM. 69th Psalm to it. *The Zeal of thy House
XII. hath eaten me up.*

~
y 9.

THUS again, the *Psalmist* counts it Matter of great Lamentation, and Humiliation, nay even of Fear, and Trembling to himself, that the Degeneracy of the Age, and the Corruption of Manners was so universal. *Rivers of Waters* (cries he) *run down mine Eyes, because they keep not thy Laws; and Horror hath taken hold upon me, because of the Wicked that forsake thy Law.*

Pf. cxix.

136.

Ib. y 53.

THUS bitterly also does the Prophet *Jeremy* lament over the desperate Wickedness, and deplorable Miseries of his Time. *Ob that mine Head* (says he) *were Waters, and mine Eyes a Fountain of Tears, that I might weep Day and Night for the Slain of the Daughter of my People. Oh! that I had in the Wilderiness a lodging Place of Way-faring Men, that I might leave my People, and go from them; for they be all Adulterers, an Assembly of treacherous Men.*

Jer. ix. 1,
2.

BUT at the same Time, that good Men out of pure Zeal are so inwardly grieved, that the Honour of God should be so boldly intrenched upon, and moved with
the

the tenderest Compassion for the Souls of S E R M.
those, who are so wilfully destroying them- XII.

I say at the same Time, they cannot but look upon the perverse Ways, and wicked Courses of incorrigible Sinners, with the utmost Aversion, and Abhorrence. Such we find were *David's* Sentiments again in the 139th *Psalms*, where he makes this Appeal to God himself. *Do not I hate* 21, 22.
them, O Lord, that hate thee? And am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with a perfect Hatred: I count them mine Enemies. That is, I utterly detest, and abominate not their Persons, but their Practices, with which I am as nearly touch'd, and as much incensed, as if they were the most spiteful Injuries, or Insolences done to myself.

AND accordingly, it appears in the 101st *Psalms*, to have been his firm Resolution, and his solemn Vow to God; that he would in his Person, and Family, and Government, take all possible Care to encourage, and advance Virtue, and to suffer none but the Lovers, and Practisers of it, to enjoy any Share of his Favour; and on the other Hand to discountenance, and suppress

SERM. preſſs Vice, and chaſtiſe its Abettors, and
XII. Proſelytes, with the ſtricteſt Severity, and
~ Rigour.

AND thus far we have ſeen, that Zeal is not only a real, and a hearty, but an affectionate Concern for God's Honour, and Service, founded upon a moſt ardent Love of God, and inſpired with a vehement Deſire to ſanctify, and glorify his moſt holy Name; and attended with a peculiar Delight in ſeeing it done, or in any Meaſure promoted by ourſelves or others. And on the other Hand, fired with a juſt Indignation, at the Boldneſs, and Growth, and Encroachment of Wickedneſs; and afflicted with a painful Senſe of Grief, and a jealous Fear, both with Reſpect to the Diſhonour that it reflects upon God, and the Deſtruction that it brings upon Mens Souls; and wrought up to a perfect Detestation of ſuch impious, and ruinous Courſes. All which ſeveral Paſſions do in their Turns contribute, as the Occaſion may require, or deſerve, or admit, to that moſt excellent, and deſirable End, of advancing the Glory, and adding to the Credit, and Power of Religion. But to proceed,

Fifthly

Fifthly, THIS affectionate Concern for SERM.
 God's Honour, ought to commence upon XII.
 good Grounds, and be guided by sound
 Judgment; otherwise we may happen to
 err grossly about the very Object of our
 Zeal, and misplace it upon some vain Idol
 of our own Imagination. Either as fan-
 cying something to be chiefly conducive to
 the Glory of God, that perhaps is least so,
 if not a plain Diminution to it; or else on
 the contrary, as suspecting something to be
 offensive to God, and injurious to his Ho-
 nour, and opposing it fiercely as such,
 without sufficient Reason.

TAKE a remarkable Example of this
 prejudicated Zeal, from the *Pharisees*, in
 our *Saviour's* Time; who, as zealous Stick-
 lers as they pretended to be for the Law,
 plainly defeated the Design of it, and eva-
 cuated one of the most acknowledged Du-
 ties in all natural Religion, out of a very
 religious Respect, no Doubt, to a certain
 Tradition amongst them; *Whoever shall* Matt. xv.
say to his Father, or Mother, it is a Gift,
by which thou mightest be profited by me, and
honour not his Father, or Mother, he shall be
free. And this they obtruded upon the

SERM. People, under the Colour of divine Authority; but *in vain did they worship God, teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men.* For their Zeal was built upon the grossest Error imaginable, if they did indeed give Credit to such a senseless Tradition; and on the strangest hypocritical Self-Delusion if they did not.

AND not unlike to this, is that other Practice of theirs, of *paying Tythe of Mint, Annis, and Cummin*, with a scrupulous Exactness; and at the same Time, *omitting the weightier Matters of the Law, Judgment, Mercy, and Faith.* For it was a fond, and absurd Conceit to think, that God was chiefly pleased with these lesser Punctilio's, or that the Observance of these might compensate for the Omission of what was much more material.

ST. Paul himself, was a wonderful Instance of this blind, bigotted Zeal, before he was converted: For he tells us of himself, that *he was exceedingly zealous of the Traditions of his Fathers.* Nay he scruples not to own, that he was a *Blasphemer, a Persecutor, and injurious*; and he assigns the Cause of all to be his *Ignorance, and Unbelief.*

BUT

BUT his Ignorance was not affected, SERM.
nor his Infidelity incurable: For having XII.
the Eyes of his Understanding afterwards
enlightned; and being chosen of God to
know his Will, and to see that just one,
and to hear the Voice of his Mouth; he
became as eminent a Pattern of a judi-
cious, well grounded Zeal, as he was before
notorious for the contrary.

AND he was particularly solicitous, to
express his own Christian Zeal, by work-
ing the Conversion of his Brethren, and
Countrymen the *Jews*; and by informing,
and directing their still mistaken, and mis-
guided Zeal, even after they had embra-
ced Christianity.

To this Purpose, is that passionate, and
tender Address to them, in the 10th to the
Romans. Brethren my Hearts Desire, and y 1, 2, 3.
Prayer is to God, for Israel, in that they
might be saved. For I bear them Record,
they have a Zeal of God, but not according
to Knowledge. For they being ignorant of
the Righteousness of God (that is our Justi-
fication through Faith in Christ) and go-
ing about to establish their own Righteousness,
(by a Reliance that is upon their legal
Perform-

SERM. Performances) *have not submitted them-*

XII. *selves to the Righteousness of God*; that is, have either rejected the Gospel, as unavailable to Justification, or else receiv'd it, not in its Simplicity, but blended it with some of their ancient Prejudices, and the abrogated Rites of the *Jewish* Religion.

AND from this Passage, 'tis evident enough, that some previous Knowledge is absolutely necessary for the Guidance, and Direction of our Zeal. For Zeal is no Guide to itself; a Man must first make a practical Judgment, and satisfy himself concerning the Fitness, and Worthiness of the Object, about which it is conversant, and of its Conducibility to God's Glory; before he can safely set it on Work, or employ it. For the *Light of the Body is the Eye*; it is the practical Judgment, that gives Direction to our Actions: *And if the Light that is in thee be Darkness*, (if it be no other than a blind Zeal destitute of Judgment) *how great is that Darkness?* That is, how great is the Perplexity, Confusion, and Inconsistency, to which we must be necessarily exposed in acting. For
a strong

a strong Gust of undistinguishing Zeal may S E R M.
be as apt, and perhaps apter, to drive one XII.
to commit the greatest Absurdities, and
Irregularities, than to disturb one in the
sober Discharge of his Duty; especially
considering how much Passion is wont to
be predominant over Reason, in your igno-
rant, and injudicious Zealots: But

Sixthly, It suffices not that our Zeal
commence upon good Grounds, unless it
be carried on, and prosecuted by such
Methods as are lawful, prudent, and pro-
per.

LAWFUL they must of Necessity be,
because 'tis a Maxim without Exception in
Morals, that the End cannot justify the
Means; and 'tis absurd indeed to think,
that God's Glory should be effectually pro-
moted by any unlawful Practice.

AND therefore it was an unwarranta-
ble Thing in *Saul*, to slay the *Gibeonites*,
(as we read he did) contrary to the Oath, 2 Sam. xxi. 2.
by which the Children of *Israel*, had for-
merly bound themselves up. And though
he did it, as it is there said, in *his Zeal to* Joshua ix.
the Children of Israel and Judah, and in 15.
Pursuance, as he might pretend, of a divine
Command,

SERMON. Command, yet was the Land punished

XII. *with three Years Famine, for his Sake, even*
because he slew the Gibeonites.

IN like Manner, Instruction to the Ignorant, and Relief to the Indigent, are charitable Acts, that may redound to the Honour of God, and may very worthily employ our Christian Zeal; but yet it were a very preposterous Way of expressing that Zeal, to make a Trade of stealing *Bibles*, to distribute among those, that are not able to buy; or to grind the Faces of the Poor, by cruel Oppression, in order to build an Hospital to maintain them in.

IT is absolutely necessary therefore, that a Zeal in itself commendable, should be pursued, and executed by lawful Means; because otherwise it forfeits its Commendation, and changes its very Nature, and becomes no other indeed, than a Sort of sanctified Wickedness.

BUT it is requisite moreover, that our Zeal should be conducted by Discretion, in the Choice, and Use of such Means, as are not only lawful, but also prudent, and proper.

FOR

FOR that which is lawful, is not always expedient; and he that does not consult the Expediency, as well as Lawfulness of the Means, he makes use of, in the Execution of his Zeal; may hazard to fall short of his End, even when he seems to have it nearest in View, and is in the hottest Pursuit after it.

FOR Example, suppose for once, that the pious Frauds, the lying Wonders, and the counterfeit Reliques of the Church of *Rome* were lawful, in order to facilitate the Conversion of *Heathens*, or to confirm the Faith of weaker *Christians*; I say, supposing, but not granting they were lawful, yet it can never be prudent, or adviseable, to apply them to such a Purpose. For even where they are swallowed without Chewing, and pass undiscover'd; they do manifestly weaken, and expose the common Faith, by building it upon a false Foundation, that when it comes to the Test, can't abide the Shock of Argument. But if the Cheat happens once to be found out, that shakes even the true Foundation; it furnishes fresh Matter of Cavil to the *Sceptic*, and the *Atheist*; and renders the
Miracles

SERM. Miracles of *Christ* himself, the main Evidence of Religion, suspected also of Imposture.

So inexpedient is it to lye for the Truth, so little is it for the Advantage of Religion, to pretend to the Power of Miracles, without being able to make it good.

AND the Truth on't is, if our Zeal be not constantly under the Conduct of Prudence, it will be too apt to miscarry at every Turn, and sometimes to prove of real Disservice to Religion. Even the common Circumstances of Time, and Place, if not heedfully watched, and discreetly chosen, may chance to be very disadvantageous to a good Cause, when 'tis most zealously espoused and prosecuted. For Instance, it is most certainly the Part of a zealous good *Christian* to reprove, and if he can, to restrain, and repress the Insolence of the common Swearer, the Scoffer, or Blasphemer; but yet should a Man thrust himself into such Company, in the midst of their irreligious Mirth, or in the Heat of their drunken Fury; what would the Event be, but the exposing of himself, and the Cause he is concerned for, to the Scorn, and

and Outrage of unreasonable, and extravagant Men? It is highly reasonable therefore in the Exercise of our Zeal, that we should always have a nice Regard to the proper Season, *δεδόνητες τῷ καιρῷ*, as some Copies render the Words of the Text, instead of *τῷ κυρίῳ*, serving ourselves of the fittest Opportunity that is, which is indeed of considerable Moment; because Zeal that is unseasonably employ'd, is for the main Part unserviceable, and too often prejudicial to Religion. But

Seventhly, The last Requisite in godly Zeal, is, that it be always expressed in a decent, and fitting Manner. And this will require our utmost Vigilance; because in a Complication of so many various Passions, as are naturally aiding, and assisting to our Zeal, we shall be in perpetual Danger of transgressing the Rules of Prudence, and Decency, nay, and of Justice, and Charity too; unless they be constantly kept under good Regulation.

IN particular, the native Fervour of Zeal, when heated with Indignation against those Practices, which we think we have just Reason to abhor; will be too apt
to

SERM.
XII.

SERM. to carry us into indecent Excesses, unless
 XII. we keep a very strict Guard upon our
 selves.

In the mean Time, most certain it is, that true Zeal which proceeds from the ardent Love of God, can never consist with Hatred, and Cruelty against our Brethren. Warm indeed it is, but not waspish; vehement but not violent; resolute but not revengeful. The Truth and Excellency of the Gospel of *Christ*, the Honour of God, and the Salvation of Men, are dear and sacred Pledges; which Zeal is always most affectionately concerned for, and will always most earnestly contend for. But then, 'tis still a compassionate Concern, and a very charitable Contention; not carried on by Virulency of Speech, or railing Accusation; for 'tis the Way of Zeal not to scold, or *bestor* People out of their Errors, but to convince them in the Meekness of Wisdom; not pronouncing the peremptory Sentence of Damnation upon all besides our selves. That's the Presumption indeed of the *Romish* Church; but true Zeal, tho' it be an earnest Advocate for God, dares not pretend or set up for a Judge in his Stead;

Godly Zeal consider'd.

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not lastly enlightening Mens Eyes by the S E R M.
dreadful Blaze of Fire, and Fagot; nor XII.
butchering Mens Bodies in order to save
their Souls; that's *Romish* Charity again.
But the Zeal that is truly *Christian*, tho'
it is always an active Instrument in pro-
moting God's Glory; yet it never presumes
to be the Executioner of his Vengeance.

IN one Word, without farther Enlarge-
ment, true Zeal ought always to consult
what is decent, and fitting; agreeable to
its own Character, and worthy of the Cause
it undertakes; lest by setting preposterous-
ly about its Work, and acting an unbe-
coming, and inconsistent Part, it should de-
feat its own End, and prove to the Detri-
ment, and Discredit of Religion, instead of
advancing, and promoting it; and this shews
how necessary, and strict the Relation is,
betwixt Zeal and Moderation.

Now to God the Father, &c.

[illegible]



SERMON XIII.

The Nature of Godly Zeal con-
sider'd.



ROM. xii. latter Part of the 11th
Verse.

*Fervent in Spirit, serving the
Lord.*



IN speaking to these Words; SERM.
I propos'd, XIII.

I. *First*, To represent to
you the genuine Nature;
the essential Properties, the requisite Qua-
Vol. II. D d 2 lifications

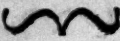
SERM. lifications of godly Zeal, or according to
 XIII. the *Apostle's* Style, this *Fervour of Spirit*,
 ~~~~~ in *serving the Lord*.

II. *Secondly*, To recommend it to your Practice, by proper Motives, and Arguments.

III. *Thirdly*, HUMBLY to offer some special Directions about the laudable, and conscionable Exercise of it.

IN executing the first Part of my Design (which was to acquaint you with the Nature, Properties, and Qualifications of godly Zeal) I set it before you under this Description, *viz.* that it is a hearty, and affectionate Concern for the Service, and Honour of God; together with an earnest Desire, and Study to promote it, upon good Grounds, by lawful, prudent, and proper Methods, and in such Manner, and Measure as is decent, and convenient.

THIS Description, I thought, might help us tolerably well, to conceive what it is, that constitutes the Essence of Zeal, and how it stands differenced, both from the direct Opposites to it, and the indirect Abuses of it; as also, how all, or most of the Cases appertaining to this Subject, might

might fairly be resolved. And therefore, SERM.  
I made it my Business, in my last Dis- XIII.  
course to explain, and confirm every Part   
of it, both by Reason, Scripture, and Ex-  
ample.

AND the Sum amounts to this; that Zeal is a hearty, and affectionate concern for God's Honour, and Service; hearty, in Opposition to hypocritical Pretence, and affectionate, in Opposition to Unconcernedness, Indifference, or Lukewarmness. That 'tis a mixed Affection, consisting of several simple Passions, each of them occasionally exerted, according as the Object is differently view'd, or apprehended; that in Particular it is primarily founded upon a most ardent Love of God, and thence inspired with a vehement Desire to glorify his most holy Name, and attended with a singular Delight to see it affectionately done, or in any good Measure promoted by ourselves, or others; and on the other Hand, fired with a just Indignation against the bold Encroachment of Vice, and the Dishonour it reflects upon God; and moved with Grief, and Pity for the Destruction it brings upon Mens Souls; and wrought



SERM. up to a perfect Detestation of all such im-  
XIII. pious, and ruinous Courses.



AND 'tis requisite, this Zeal should commence upon good Grounds, that is, upon sober, and judicious Principles, to prevent its being misplaced upon an undue Object. It is requisite it should be carried on, by lawful, prudent, and proper Methods; by lawful Methods, because it would be preposterous to think of advancing the Glory of God, by any unlawful Practice: By prudent, and proper Methods; because what is of itself lawful, may perhaps not be expedient; and what in some Circumstances would be highly expedient, may not be equally so in all. And therefore Discretion ought always to be the Companion, and Guide of Zeal. And lastly, 'tis requisite that Zeal should always be governed with Temper, and expressed, and executed in such Manner as is decent, and convenient. For where there is constant Occasion for the Exercise of so many various Passions, and that with some Degree of Vehemence; unless those Passions be under very good Care, and Management, they may be too apt to transport us beyond

yond the Bounds of Reason, Justice, or SERM.  
Charity, and thereby betray us into great XIII.  
Indecencies, and Irregularities, and cause  
even a well-meant Zeal, unhappily to mis-  
carry; for want of the Temperament of a  
little Calmness, and Moderation.

AND thus having refreshed your Memo-  
ries with a brief Recollection of what I  
insisted more largely upon before, that so  
you may have the Image, and Represen-  
tation of godly Zeal still before your Eyes:  
I now proceed,

II. *Secondly*, As I propos'd in the se-  
cond Place, to recommend it to your Pra-  
ctice, by proper Motives, and Argu-  
ments.

AND, I think, I may deservedly recom-  
mend it, as one of the justest, the most  
reasonable, and the most necessary, the  
most becoming, and the most beneficial  
good Qualities, that can adorn a *Christian's*  
Practice. And

*First*, It is most just, whether we con-  
sider God's prerogative Right, to the best  
of our Affections, and Services; or the e-

SERM. quitable Reasons on our Part, that bind us  
XIII. thereunto.

FOR most unquestionably, God has a prerogative Right to the best of our Affections, and Services; and that immediately derived from the very Preeminence of his Nature; not barely as he is the supreme Being, and the Author, Proprietor, and Disposer of all Things, but as he is the supreme Good, and therefore the ultimate End, and Scope of rational Creatures, and their Actions; and the absolute Complement of all the Happiness they are capable of.

FOR if we can but raise our Thoughts high enough, to behold, (though at the humblest Distance) his infinite Wisdom, and Goodness, and Mercy, and the rest of his Excellencies, and Perfections; he must needs appear to be the most amiable, the most desirable, the most delightful, and every Way the most eminently worthy Object of our Contemplation, and Devotion; and the most passionate Addresses, and respectful Expressions of an enflamed Zeal,

FOR



FOR whom have we in Heaven, but him? SERM.  
*And who is there on Earth, that we can de-* XIII.  
*fire besides him?* He is the only perfect, all-  
 sufficient, inexhaustible, unchangeable, eter-  
 nal Good. This is his peculiar Glory, which  
 he will not, he cannot give to another;  
 neither should we misbestow the Ardor of  
 our Affections upon any but him, who best  
 deserves them; nor should we suffer them  
 to wax cool, and languish in his Service;  
 but we ought cheerfully to offer them up,  
 upon the humble Altar of a fervent Heart,  
 as a whole Burnt-offering, to his Praise,  
 and Honour. It is but what he is entitled  
 to by the strictest natural Right; of which,  
 it would be highly unjust in us to deprive  
 him; especially if it be remembred, that  
 there are equitable Reasons on our Part,  
 that strongly bind us to the contrary; in  
 Regard, both of our manifold Receipts *from*  
*him*, and the plentiful Communications,  
 and the most surprizing, and endearing  
 Instances of his Goodness to us.

Our manifold Receipts from him, did I  
 say? Nay verily, it is even all that we are,  
 and all that we have; all our Powers, Fa-  
 culties, and Affections; all our Advanta-  
 ges,

SERM. ges, and Improvements; particularly that  
XIII. remarkable Privilege of the humane Kind,  
~~~~ above Brute Creatures; the Notion of a  
God, I mean, the Impression of religious
Principles, and the Capacity, and Propen-
sity to adore, and enjoy our Maker. These
are all the Gifts of God, or rather Talents
committed to our Trust by him; and there-
fore the Use, and Interest must of Right
belong to himself. And it is a Rule, even
approved among ourselves, that to whom
Men have committed much, of him they
will ask the more. And therefore since
God has planted the Sense of Religion in
our Nature, and given us suitable Affections
to animate and actuate our religious Zeal;
it is but Justice, that our best Reason, and
our most vigorous Passions, and our active
Endeavours should be zealously employ'd
in his Service; and as all the Rivers run
into the Sea, and return to the Place
from whence they came; so should our
Gifts, and Endowments, which issue first
from the Fountain of God's exuberant
Grace, flow entirely into the Ocean of his
Glory. For of him, and through him,
and to him are all Things.

AND

Godly Zeal consider'd.

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AND besides; there is this particular SERM.
Consideration to enforce the Obligation XIII.
upon us; that God has given us (if I may
have leave so to speak) the generous Pro-
vocation to be zealous for him, by his ex-
pressing, and manifesting so tender, and
affectionate Concern for us, and our Wel-
fare.

THE particular Affection, and yearning
Bowels of a Mother towards her Infant,
that hangs at her Breast, are but a faint
Image of God's never failing Love, and
Compassion to us. *Can a Woman forget* Ch..xlix.
her sucking Child, saith Isaiah, that she ^{15.}
should not have Compassion on the Son of her
Womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I
not forget thee. And how pathetically
kind, and encouraging, is that Invitation
to Repentance, in the 33^d of Ezekiel, and
the 11th Verse: *As I live, saith the Lord*
God, I have no Pleasure in the Death of
the Wicked; but that the Wicked turn from
his Way, and live: Turn ye, turn ye from
your evil Ways, for why will ye die, O House
of Israel?

BUT no Words, no Conceptions can e-
ver reach the amazing Height of that un-
parallel'd

S E R M. parallel'd Love which induced the God of
 XIII. all Mercies, to send *his only begotten Son*
 ~~~~~ *into the World, that the World through him*  
*might be saved.* Never was Love like un-

Luke i.  
 68.

to this Love, wherewith God *visited, and*  
*redeemed his People; and raised up a Horn*  
*of Salvation for us.* And, beloved, if God  
 so loved us, and gave us so wonderful  
 Proof of his Love; ought not we in all  
 Equity to make all possible Returns of  
 Love to him? Surely we shall be very un-  
 just, and ungrateful to our compassionate  
 Redeemer, if we think any Zeal too much,  
 any Industry too great, any Labour too  
 painful, any Attempt too hazardous in the  
 Promotion of his Honour, who hath taken  
 such abundant Care to secure our Happi-  
 ness. But to confine myself within some  
 Compass,

*Secondly, Our Zeal for God's Honour,*  
*and Service, is in itself as reasonable, as*  
*with Respect to God 'tis just.* For one  
 main Use of Reason (as I take it) is to di-  
 rect, and govern our Passions in such  
 Manner as to make them subservient to  
 Virtue. And this Direction, and Govern-  
 ment of the Passions, consists, partly in de-  
 termining

*Godly Zeal consider'd.*

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termining them towards their proper Ob-  
jects, and partly in keeping them under  
due Regulation; that so they may incite  
us to pursue some rational, and worthy  
End, and not turn us out of the Way to  
it, by any precipitate, or disorderly Mo-  
tion. And certainly Zeal, which is an  
affectionate Concern for God's Honour,  
and Service, is an Affection placed upon  
the most deserving Object; *i. e.* the su-  
preme Good; whose attractive Excellen-  
cy in Measure of Affection none can e-  
qual.

AND therefore the Evangelical Precept  
is, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with*  
*all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and*  
*with all thy Mind*; it being impossible in-  
deed, to be immoderate in the Love of  
him, who is infinitely lovely.

S E R M.  
XIII.  
Mat. xxii.  
37.

BUT yet lest the Irregularity, or Excess  
of any other Passion, that is any Ingredi-  
ent in godly Zeal, should mislead us, and  
carry us off from the End proposed; it is  
a Property of such Zeal to commence up-  
on good Grounds, to proceed by lawful,  
prudent, and proper Methods, and never  
to shew itself, but in decent, and fitting  
Manner

SERM. Manner; so that 'tis never supposed to be  
 XIII. let loose from the Restraints of Justice,  
 and Prudence, and Charity.

AND therefore Zeal indeed is but Passion sanctified to religious Purposes, under the Guidance of Reason, influenced by religious Principles, and steadily pursuing the Glory of God, as its great and ultimate End. And as such, I may fairly commend it to any reasonable Man; since 'tis the highest Act of Reason, and not the Effect of enthusiastical Heat, nor the Effort of mere Passion. But

*Thirdly*, ZEAL is not only reasonable, but necessary; and necessary it is, both to the *Being*, and the *Well-being* of Religion. For

*First*, THE very Essence of Religion consists in due Apprehensions of God's Excellencies, and Perfections; and suitable Affections, and Demeanour towards him. If Men have any just, or honourable Conceptions of God; this will naturally excite their zealous Affections, and produce an Esteem, and Love for him, an earnest Desire, and Study to please him, a Complacency, and Delight in so doing; a sollici-  
 tous



rous Care to prevail with others to do the SERM.  
 like, and Grief, and Commiseration (mixt XIII.  
 with a pious Indignation) to see People  
 do otherwise. But as for those that feel  
 no Passions of this Sort, who are either  
 wholly unaffected, and unconcerned, or at  
 best but very supine, and indifferent about  
 Matters of this Nature, they ('tis to be  
 fear'd) are either ignorant of, or averse to  
 the true Principles of Religion; or they  
 have in a great Measure lost the Sense of  
 it. They may perhaps *retain the Form of*  
*Godliness*, or the empty Profession of it,  
 but they are *Strangers to the Power, and*  
*Virtue of it*: Their Religion is a bare Ske-  
 leton, heartless, and lifeless, and of no Ac-  
 count in the Sight of God. So essential is  
 Zeal, to the very Being of Religion. And

*Secondly*, 'Tis of no less Moment to its  
 Well-being, that is, to its Preservation, and  
 Furtherance in the Word. For the great  
 Enemy to God, and Religion, and the  
 Souls of Men, is very studious, and indu-  
 strious to promote the Kingdom of Dark-  
 ness; his Instruments are very numerous,  
 and always active, and indefatigable in his  
 Service: His Stratagems are various, vio-  
 lent

SERM. lent and subtle; sometimes assailing the  
 XIII. Church of God with furious Persecution,  
 ~~~~~ and sometimes endangering it with too  
 much Ease and Security; sometimes dividing the Unity, and perverting the Faith of *Christians*, by Schisms, and Heresies, and sometimes corrupting their Morals with filthy, and contagious Vices; sometimes striking at the very Foundation of Religion, by downright Infidelity, and sometimes betraying its Strength by easy Credulity; Sometimes exposing the Word of God, by a Mixture of fond Superstition, and sometimes affronting it by impudent Profaneness.

AND amidst all this fierce Opposition, and the many Perils with which Religion has in all Ages been environed, there was Need of Zeal, and Courage to defend it. And had not the first Defenders of *Christianity*, the glorious Company of the *Apostles*, and the Noble Army of Martyrs, been supported with a very extraordinary Degree of this Zeal; their Religion must in all humane Probability have been hunted and hissed out of the World. Nor has it such fair Quarter at this very Day, but
 that

that it will require a good Stock of Fer-^{SERM.}
vour, and Fortitude in those, that are re-^{XIII.}
solved to maintain their own Integrity, 
and appear in Vindication of a Cause, so
much maligned on the one Hand, and so
much neglected on the other.

FOR if we take a Survey of Religion,
as the State of it is now among ourselves;
how is her Beauty obscured, and defaced
with an infinite Diversity of Sects, and O-
pinions, and needless Divisions, and con-
tentious Disputations? How is her Health
endangered, by the most pestilent Heresies,
and her Strength impair'd by unhappy
Schisms, 'till it is at length become the
Scorn of the Contumacious, and the Tri-
umph of the Libertine, and the Atheist?

AND in the mean Time, how do *Scep-
ticism*, and *Deism*, and Infidelity lift up
their Heads, and vaunt themselves? And
how do all Manner of Irreligion, and Im-
morality abound, and increase among us?

AND this shews the Necessity of a cou-
ragious, and vigorous Zeal, both to pre-
vent the Growth of Impiety, and to sup-
press it, when it has gathered Strength.
For all that unwearied Diligence, that

SERM. Contrivance, and Confederacy, with which
 XIII. the Devil, and his Agents endeavour to
 propagate Vice, and render it predominant, will not easily be baffled, by sitting still, and sighing, and wishing well to the Cause of God, and hoping for better Times. No! 'Tis certainly a necessary Duty more especially incumbent upon those, who are entrusted with any Share in the Government, (not with the careless *Gallio* to overlook all these Things; not with the indulgent *Eli*, to say softly, *Why do ye do these Things?* It is no good Report I bear: But to rebuke Offenders sharply, to shame the less ingenuous, to chastise the more presumptuous, and to omit nothing that may lawfully, and prudently be done towards the effectual Restraint of fashionable, and prevailing Wickedness, But besides the Necessity of it,

Fourthly, THERE is nothing more becoming, and commendable in a *Christian*, than a Zeal for his God; or rather nothing more unbecoming, and indeed inexcusable, than the contrary. For how zealous, I beseech you, are the Children of this World in their Generation? With what Appli-

Application and Vigour, and Ardor do S E R M.
 they pursue their little temporal Ends, and XIII.
 Interests? If Honour be their Idol, how
 obsequiously do they worship it, how ea-
 gerly do they desire it, how jealous are
 they of it? How dissatisfied without it?
 How full of Envy, and Indignation a-
 gainst those, that stand in their Way to it?
 If *Mammon* be their God, how do they
 compass Sea, and Land to serve him? And
 with what Pains do they get, with what
 Care do they keep, with what Study do
 they increase the Treasure, that they
 set their Hearts upon? If Love be the
 reigning Passion, how do they seek to in-
 grate, and endear themselves, and to
 testify their Esteem, and Respect for, and
 their Delight in the Persons beloved, by
 courting their Presence, by observing their
 Pleasure, by espousing their Interest, and
 Reputation, and by resenting, and reven-
 ging all the Wrongs, and Indignities, which
 they happen to suffer? And shall the
 Things that are in the World, *the Lusts*
of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eyes, and the
Pride of Life, be thus zealously adored?
 Shall God be thus outrivalled by his Crea-

SERM. tures according to the Opinion, and Pra-
 XIII. ctice of the Wicked? And shall the Re-
 ~~~~~ religious, God's own Servants, and Wor-  
 shippers, appear cool in his Service, even  
 to Indifference? As if there were no  
 Charms, or Attractives in infinite Perfecti-  
 ons, no Transports in divine Love, as if  
 there were nothing warming, or affecting  
 in Religion? Nay, as if it were cold as  
 Ice at the Heart, to quench all their Heat,  
 and damp their Spirits, and deaden their  
 Endeavours. For Shame therefore, those  
 that pretend to Religion, and to set their  
 Affections on Things above, and not on  
 Things on the Earth; ought not to be guilty  
 of so great an *Indecorum*; when they have  
 Objects of such transcendent Excellency, to  
 excite, and to inflame their Zeal, they ought  
 not to suffer themselves to be so visibly  
 outdone by the Children of this World, in  
 their worldly Pursuits. Add we

*Fifthly*, OVER and above the Decency  
 of the Thing, that Zeal is highly benefi-  
 cial, and that both to the Person endued  
 with it, and to others. To the Person en-  
 dued with it, it is,

*First,*



*First*, BECAUSE it manifestly tends to S E R M.  
the Improvement of his Graces, and to XIII.  
his better Proficiency in Godliness. For the  
more conversant a Man is in religious Du-  
ties, the more constant, and intent he is  
at his Devotions, the more desirous he is  
of pleasing God himself, and the more im-  
patient of seeing him dishonoured by o-  
thers; by so much the more lively Idea  
will he acquire of the divine Perfections;  
by so much the higher will his Esteem  
rise, by so much the more exalted will his  
Affections be; and lastly, by so much the  
more sweet, and relishing, the Complac-  
ency that he takes in the Service of his  
God, and the Discharge of a good Con-  
science.

AND for his farther Encouragement, he  
is entitled to God's especial Favour, and a  
more abundant Recompence of Reward at  
his Hands. For we have his own express  
Word for it, *Them that honour me, I will* Sam. ii.  
*honour*; which Honour 'tis observable, old 30.

*Eli*, (who was a good Man, but an in-  
different Magistrate) very justly forfeited  
for humouring his Sons above God, as we  
read, *Y 29.* and for suffering their abo-

SERMON. minable Prophanations to go unpunished.

XIII. *I will judge his House for ever, for the Iniquity which he knoweth, saith the Lord; because his Sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.* Whereas on the contrary,

when Phineas, zealous for God's Sake, stood up, and executed Judgment upon the adulterous Couple in the very Act;

Ps. cvi. 31. *That (the Psalmist tells us) was counted to him, for Righteousness unto all Generations, for evermore.*

BUT moreover, the good Man's Zeal redounds to the Benefit of others, as well as himself; for there is a native Simplicity in an honest, undissembled Zeal; that will attract People's Eyes, and strike them with a secret Veneration for Religion; and the Force of a good Example, backed with a becoming Earnestness of Affection, will command both the Observation, and Approbation of the Beholders, and provoke them (as it may happily prove) to a pious Emulation. And is not he a mighty Benefactor; who by the Light, and Direction, by the Persuasion, or rather Authority of his Example, is likely to be Instrumental in converting Sinners from the Error

Error, of their Ways; in saving their Souls SERM.  
from Death, and hiding a Multitude of XIII.

Sin? \* Although this also will prove to his own unspeakable Advantage in the End; and add Lustre to that Glory, with which he shall finally be rewarded in Heaven. For they that be wise (or Teachers of others, as the Prophecy of *Daniel* assures Ch. xii. 3. us) shall shine as the Brightness of the Firmament, and they that turn many to Righteousness, as the Stars for ever. And now in the Upshot of all, if any Justice or Equity can oblige, if any Reason can prescribe, if any Necessity can enforce, if any Decency can invite, or any Advantage can allure; all these do conspire, to recommend godly Zeal, as one of the most lovely Graces, and of the greatest Use, and Ornament in our *Christian Practice*.

Now to God the Father, &c.



For my dear friend  
and brother  
John Jay  
of New York  
I have the honor  
to acknowledge  
the receipt of your  
letter of the 10th  
inst. and in reply  
to inform you  
that the same  
has been forwarded  
to the proper  
authorities for  
their consideration.

Yours very truly  
J. Jay

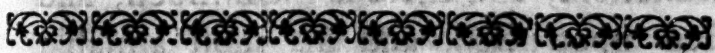
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# SERMON XIV.

The Nature of Godly Zeal considered.



ROM. xii. latter Part of the 11<sup>th</sup> Verse.

*Fervent in Spirit, serving the Lord.*



IN discoursing upon these **SERM.**  
Words, I proposed, **XIV.**

I. *First*, To represent to you the genuine Nature, the essential Properties, the requisite Qualifications of godly Zeal, or according to the

SERM. the Apostle's Style, this *Fervour of Spirit in*  
 XIV. *serving the Lord.*

~~~~~ II. *Secondly*, To recommend it to your Practice, by proper Motives, and Arguments; which two Particulars I have fully consider'd. I come now

III. *Thirdly*, and *Lastly*, To offer some few brief Directions about the laudable, and conscionable Exercise of our Zeal, and I have done. And

First, LET us endeavour to raise our Meditations, and exercise them much, and often upon God, and his most amiable Perfections: Let us contemplate him, as the Sovereign Good, his Goodness as the Fountain of our Happiness, and his Glory, as our last and chiefest End. In a Word, let us set the Lord always before us, and we shall soon feel the warm, and quickening Influence of his heavenly Presence. We shall find a Fire kindling within us, and burning with a bright, but gentle Flame, pointed directly up towards Heaven; we shall find ourselves inspired with a defecated Zeal, that will teach us to purify ourselves, as God is pure, and to de-
 dedicate

dedicate not only ourselves, and our religious S E R M.
 Services to him, but even to sanctify the XIV.
 common Actions of Life; so that whether
 we eat, or drink, or whatsoever we do, we
 may do all to the Glory of God. But

Secondly, HAVING this excellent End in
 View, let us aim directly at it, and let us
 take Care that our Zeal be unbiaſſed, and
 diſintereſted in the Proſecution of it; and
 there is Need of this Caution; for as a ju-
 dicious Author obſerves, * the Zeal of God's
 Glory is many Times unconſcionably pre-
 tended, where either it is not at all, but
 in Shew, or at leaſt wiſe mingled with
 ſuch a ſtrong Infuſion of corrupt Partia-
 lity, and Self-ſeeking, as ſowereth it ex-
 tremely, and rendreth it very inexcusable.
 A remarkable Inſtance of which we have
 in the *Phariſees*, who juggled with the
 poor Man who had been born blind; ſeek-
 ing to work upon him by fair Words, and
 Pretences, *give God the Praise, &c.* when John ix.
 at the ſame Time, they wickedly endea- ^{24.}
 voured to obſcure the Glory of that mira-

* *Sanderſon's Sermons*, p. 544.

SERMON. *culous Cure*, which *Jesus* had wrought
 XIV. upon him. And indeed, all History abounds with Instances, (I wish I could except our own) wherein Piety has been the Pretence, but Lucre, or vain Glory the Design; wherein Conscience has appeared like the Intercessor, but Contumacy has been the Abettor; wherein Liberty has been the Plea, but Government the Aim. In short, wherein the Vindication of God's Honour, and the Reformation of Religion have been made the Stale to Faction, Revenge, Rapine, and Sacrilege, or the like. But if Men are truly zealous for God, they must have a Care of adulterating their Zeal, with the base Mixture of any wicked Lust, or corrupt End of their own; for at that Rate, their pretended Sanctity is both the greatest Presumption, and the boldest Prophanation.

Thirdly, To keep our Zeal from wandering, or misplacing itself upon improper Objects, it will be requisite, as much as in us lies, to furnish ourselves with a competent Measure of *Christian* Knowledge. 'Tis true, Ignorance, that is invincibly, and incurably such, is some Kind of Excuse for

for an erroneous Conscience, and a mistaken Zeal: And it must be confessed, it were in vain gravely to advise those to be knowing, and discreet, who perhaps are hardly capable of it. But yet we may advise People to inform themselves of their Duty, as well as they can. And the main Precepts both of Morality, and *Christianity*, do in Effect lie level to every Capacity; and if a Man will bring but a teachable Mind along with him, and an honest Heart, he may learn enough of his Duty from the brief Explication of it in the *Church Catechism*, both to guide his Practice, and his Zeal too; provided he is contented to confine his Zeal within the Compass of his Knowledge, and not think himself wiser than his Teachers.

BUT if he will needs be over righteous, and over wise, and over zealous, about Matters, that are above his slender Scantling; so far he becomes answerable for all the Mistakes, that such a blind Zeal (and the blinder, commonly the fiercer) will be apt to lead him into. And such a Man must in Course be expos'd to a good Plenty of Mistakes: For Ignorance is as unfit to be
the

SERM.
XIV.

SERM. the Nurse, and Handmaid of Zeal, as it
XIV. is to be the Parent of Devotion.

~~~~~ A *Fourth* Rule, that is always carefully to be observ'd in the Exercise of our Zeal, is to proportion it to the Nature, Dignity, and Importance of the Things, about which it is conversant.

FOR as God, and his Glory, is therefore the most immediate Object of our Zeal, and deserves without Comparison, the highest, and most exalted Degree of our Affection, as being indeed our supreme Good, and our ultimate End: So all Things else whatsoever, in which the Glory of God is concerned, will deserve proportionably of our Affection, and Esteem, as they are in themselves more, or less valuable; or in their Consequence more or less conducive to that best, and most excellent End. And by this Standard, we must constantly measure our Zeal, otherwise, if it be not totally void of Judgment, and ill founded at the Bottom, it will at least be very faulty, and irregular in the Process.

FOR Example; if our Zeal be just, and well proportion'd, it will be sure to concern

cern itself most, about Matters of the SERM.  
greatest Moment; it will place the Sum, XIV.  
and Stress of all Religion on a sound Faith,   
and sincere Obedience, and in worshipping  
God with humble Reverence, and a pure  
Heart, and heavenly Affections, according  
to his own most holy Institution; and lastly,  
in the conscientious Practice of all those a-  
miable Virtues, and Graces, which do so  
naturally flow (as it were) from the un-  
feigned Love of God, and our Neighbour;  
such as are Righteousness, Humility, Pu-  
rity, Peaceableness, Meekness, Brotherly  
Kindness, and the like.

ON the contrary, if our Zeal be not ad-  
justed in due Proportion, as it should be,  
if it does not corrupt the very Essence of  
Religion, it will go near to spoil its Beau-  
ty, and Symmetry, and mangle its Inte-  
grity, and render it a Thing very incon-  
stant, and unlike to itself. Sometimes the  
Substance of all Religion shall be made  
to consist of the bare Efficacy of Faith,  
exclusive of the Necessity of good Works;  
sometimes an honest, moral Life shall be  
esteemed the one Thing needful, and es-  
sential, without the unreasonable Imposi-  
tion

SERM. fition of requiring us to believe Things  
XIV. above our Reason.



SOMETIMES Circumstance shall pass for the most substantial Part of Religion: And the venerable Matron shall be trick'd out in a gaudy Dress of numerous, and pompous Ceremonies, contrary to her native Purity, and Simplicity: And this outward adorning, her fond Adorers will be prone to admire, instead of her real, and intrinsic Excellency.

SOMETIMES again, she shall be stripped naked of all Ornament, though never so proper, and becoming; and an affected Slovenliness shall juggle out even common Decency, or at least a great Part of that external Reverence, which should always accompany the Worship of God. Instead whereof, Mens Minds shall be filled with needless Scruples, and superstitious Fears of complying with any indifferent Rite, though in its own Nature never so innocent, and in its Use never so solemn, and significant: And this in Despight of all good Order, in Opposition to their spiritual Pastors, and Governors, and with the manifest Hazard, both of the Churches Peace,  
and



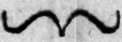
and Safety, as well as the sensible Decay of true *Christian* Piety, and Charity.

SERM.  
XIV.

THESE, and such as these, will be the mischievous Effects of such a disproportionate Zeal. It will sometimes resolve all Zeal into a *Solfidian* Confidence; and sometimes it will sink it down to the Level of natural Reason, and common Morality. Sometimes it will empty it all into Superstition, or mere Formality, and sometimes it will fill it full of Scrupulosity, and Preciseness; and drive it from one Superstition to another; but to be sure, where there is no due Proportion observed, there can be no Regularity, Steadiness, or Consistency.

It is most highly requisite therefore, that we should take the Measure of our Zeal from the Nature, and Moment of Things. So shall we be convinced, that the Sum, and Substance of Religion, does jointly consist in Faith, and Obedience; that the Belief, and Practice of a *Christian*, are most strictly connected together, and necessarily dependent upon each other: That the very Spirit, and Life of Devotion, springs from the inward Sense, and Affection of the Heart, and that this will

SERM. naturally exprefs it felf in fuch Rites, and

XIV.  Ufages, and Geftures, as appear to be the propereft *Signs* of a profound Regard, and Veneration; that 'tis a fuperftitious Piece of Fondnefs to miftake the Signs, for the Things fignified; and that 'tis as fond, and fuperftitious to fcruple the Ufe of fuch customary figns, (though in themfelves indifferent) for fear of Superftition. In one Word, if we weigh Things in a well fixed Ballance, we fhall be thoroughly convinced, that the Glory of God ought to be the ultimate Scope of all our Actions: That the fpiritual Part of his divine Worfhip, and the weightier Matters of the Law, Piety, Probity, and Mercy, are more immediately conducive thereunto: That the Circumftantials, and Appendages of Religion are to be valued according to their Ufefulness, and Subferviency to the main End; and laftly, whatever Difference there may be in other Things, that the Unity, and Peace of God's Church, and the mutual Edification of the Body in Love, are Matters of the greateft Weight, and ought to be efteem'd, and profecuted as fuch by every good *Chriftian*, even at the  
Expencc

Expencc of any slender Opinion of his SERM.  
own, or any weak Scruple, that he may XIV.  
chance to entertain about Things, that are  
less concerning.

*Fifthly*, **FOR** the better ordering of our Zeal, it will be necessary, that we take care to employ it, every one within the Sphere of his proper Station, and Vocation. *For God is not the Author of Confusion, but of Peace: as in all the Churches of* 1 Cor. xiv. 33.  
*the Saints*, saith our Apostle. And it is not the Part of godly Zeal to break in upon that sacred Order, which God himself thought fit to establish; and for the Preservation of which, he dispensed at first such Diversities of Gifts, Administrations, and Operations, but all subordinate one to another; that so he might be glorified in all Things, and always in the most orderly Manner. From whence the necessary Inference is, (as *St. Paul* himself deduces it in this very Chapter.) That *having Gifts differing according to the Grace that is* Ver. 6, 7, 8.  
*given to us, whether Prophecy, let us prophecy, according to the Proportion of Faith; or Ministry, let us wait on our Ministering: Or he that teacheth, on teaching:* Or he



SERM. that exhorteth, on Exhortation: He that  
 XIV. giveth, let him do it with Simplicity: He  
 that ruleth, with Diligence: He that shew-  
 eth Mercy, with Cheerfulness. The plain  
 Meaning of which is, that 'tis the Duty  
 of a *Christian* to acquit himself faithfully,  
 and zealously in the Service of God; every  
 Man according to his Function, and his  
 Talent, without interfering with another  
 Man's Office, or pretending to more than  
 belongs to him.

EVERY one is not empower'd to rule,  
 or enabled to prophesy, that perhaps may  
 be qualified to teach, and to exhort, or if  
 not for that, at least to minister, and shew  
 Mercy. His Duty in the mean Time is  
 to attend upon the Business that he is qua-  
 lified for, or called to; and not to extend  
 his Zeal beyond its due Bounds, either by  
 envying those, that move in a larger, or  
 higher Sphere than himself; or by arro-  
 gating to himself equal Power, or Abilities  
 with them, without sufficient Ground, or  
 Warrant.

EVERY private *Christian* is not called to  
 be a Minister, or a Magistrate: Nor is e-  
 very Minister a Bishop, nor every Ma-  
 gistrate

gistrate the supreme. Let every Man SERM.  
therefore, wherein he is called, there- XIV.  
in abide with God. It is fit the pri-  
vate *Christian* should content himself,  
without invading the Ministry, or the Ma-  
gistracy; let it suffice that he shew the  
Sincerity of his Zeal, by quietly submit-  
ting to his Teachers, and Governors, and  
by ordering his own Conversation aright,  
and by helping forward the Edification of  
others, by his friendly Advice, and frater-  
nal Correption, or at least by his charita-  
be Intercession for them.

It belongs to the inferior Clergy, to  
feed their several Flocks with sound In-  
struction, and ghostly Counsel, and seaso-  
nable Reproof; and *to be Examples to the*  
*Believers in Word, in Conversation, in Spi-* 1 Tim. iv.  
*rit, in Charity, in Faith, in Purity,* 12. and in  
all due Submission to their Superiors: It is  
incumbent upon our Ecclesiastical Gover-  
nours, at once to strengthen, and to tem-  
per their Authority, by their Wisdom,  
and Gravity, and Impartiality, and Con-  
descension to their Brethren; and a vigi-  
lant Care, and Concern for God's Church,  
*over which the Holy Ghost has made them*

SERM. *Overscers.* And by the good Government,

XIV. both of themselves, and those committed  
 to their Charge, to render Religion venerable, and lovely in the Eyes of all, and to recommend it to the more especial Favour, and Protection of the civil Powers.

AND here it is the Office of the subordinate Magistrates, seasonably to step in, and to lend their Aid, and Countenance towards the Support of true Religion, and Virtue; by the due Execution of such wholesome Laws as are in being, against Irreligion and Immorality, without Fear, or Favour, or any partial Connivance at wicked, and unlawful Practices, either in themselves, or others.

AND *lastly*, It is the Duty, (plain Duty shall I say, or rather the great Prerogative) of the Supreme, to be the Guardian of Religion, and not only to defend it with the secular Arm, and to secure to it its peculiar Immunities; but also to encourage, and promote it, all that is possible, to make all prudent Provisions to that Purpose, by the legislative Authority, to add fresh Vigour, and Influence to it, by the Virtue of a living Example as well as the Force of dead



dead Laws. In a Word to make it the SERM.  
chief Object of his Care, and allow it XIV.  
the first Place in his Favour. 

AND thus, if we keep every one to his own Rank, and Order, we may all from the lowest to the highest, approve ourselves acceptable to God; and contribute in some good Measure to the Advancement of his Glory.

BUT if we suffer our Zeal, to transgress the Bounds of our proper Station, and Vocation; the Gate is then opened wide to all Manner of Disorder, and Confusion, and we know not what Extravagancies we may be hurried into.

THUS for Instance, if Men will needs set themselves up for Teachers, and run away, and preach before they are sent; what can the Product in all Likelihood be, but a plentiful Crop of wild Opinions, and monstrous Errors? Witness the great Variety of discordant Sects among ourselves, and in Particular, the Absurdities, and Blasphemies, of which the more deluded People called *Quakers*, are so notoriously guilty.

SERM. THUS again, if Men will needs advance themselves to the Government of the Church, before they have attain'd to the due Government of themselves; the least Check to their immodest Ambition, makes them presently start aside, and where shall you find them next, but at the Head of some new Schism, or Heresy? And such Disappointments as these gave Birth, the *Historians* tell us, to the Whimsies, and Revelations of *Montanus*, and the prodigious Conceit of *Valentinus*, and the Heterodoxies of *Arius*, and *Aërius*, and indeed to most of the antient Heresies.

ONCE more, If People will needs take upon them to be Reformers in Religion, without competent Knowledge, or Authority, and in their Zeal resolve to pull down tumultuously, though they can't tell how to take one regular Step towards building up again: I say, What can the Issue of this be, but Distraction, and Anarchy, and a Medley of Religion, as confused, as were the Languages of *Babel*? witness the blessed Attempt that was once made towards a purer Reformation among us; the sad Effects

Effects of which are still visible, not only in the Multiplicity of Opinions in Religion, but also in the irreligious, and licentious Principles, which are but too much in Vogue, and which first found their Entrance at the back Door of *Enthusiasm*. SERM.  
XIV.

FROM all which Instances, and many more that might be produced, it appears, how necessary it is, that Zeal should ever be confined, within its proper Limits. But to hasten forwards,

*Sixthly*, OUR Zeal ought always to be temper'd, with a due Mixture of Moderation: For 'tis a gross Mistake, to imagine that Zeal, and Moderation are Opposites, and Strangers to each other; whereas indeed they are most inseparable Friends and Allies; insomuch, that that Zeal, (or whatever it is, that passes under that Title) is never commendable, which is not allay'd with something of Moderation; or whatever it is, that puts on the specious Name, is always culpable, that is not always enliven'd, and invigorated with Zeal.



SERM. FOR if we consider it, what is Zeal? It  
 XIV. is not a sudden *Impetus*, or a violent Heat,  
 or the mere Effect of Rage, and Frenzy;  
 but 'tis a rational, as well as affectionate  
 Concern for God's Honour, and Service,  
 deliberately taken up, upon solid, and so-  
 ber Grounds, and prudently carried on by  
 proper Methods, and still expressed in de-  
 cent, and fitting Manner.

AND on the other Hand, what is Mo-  
 deration? It is not a lukewarm Indifference  
 in Matters of Religion; it is not a Loose-  
 ness, or Latitude of Opinion; it is not a  
 sneaking Complaisance to Error, nor a wa-  
 vering Compliance, first with one Party,  
 and then with another; but 'tis an Even-  
 ness of Temper, resulting from a well poi-  
 sed Judgment, and well regulated Affecti-  
 ons, and constantly adhering to the Cause  
 of Truth, and Goodness, but never forego-  
 ing that Candour, and Equity, that Meek-  
 ness and Humanity, which are due, even  
 to those that are otherwise minded.

So that these two are not only confi-  
 stent, but necessary to each other.

FOR take away your Moderation, and  
 Zeal is the most irregular, furious, and ungo-

ungovernable Thing in the whole World; SERMON  
and take away your Zeal, and then Mode- XIV.  
ration degenerates into Remissness, and Su-  
pineness, which becalms the Soul, and leaves  
it quite destitute of Resolution, Constancy  
and Vigour.

'Tis fit therefore, that both should act  
in Conjunction, that neither may miss  
of its desired Effect, nor want its due  
Praise.

LET Zeal then be (as it ought to be)  
very ardent, and vehement in the Love  
of God, very active, and industrious in  
his Service, very bold and resolute in  
Defence of his Truth, and in Vindication  
of his Laws; and full of a just Detestation  
of those vicious Opinions, and Practices,  
which reflect Dishonour upon his holy  
Name, and betray Mens Souls into endless  
Perdition; and hitherto there is no Dan-  
ger of being immoderate.

BUT here 'twill be proper for Modera-  
tion to interpose, and to determine the In-  
dignation, that good Men are apt to con-  
ceive on such Occasions, against the Er-  
rors, and Vices of their Adversaries, and  
not their Persons; and to keep their Zeal  
from

SERM. from all violent Transports of Passion,  
 XIV. from all sinister Interpretations, unchari-  
 table Censures, unjust, or odious Charges,  
 unnecessary Aggravations, or Provocations;  
 from all Fierceness of Contention, from  
 all Bitterness of Language: In a Word,  
 from all Manner of uncourteous Treat-  
 ment, or rigorous Usage, even of those,  
 through whose Weakness, or Wilfulness  
 such Offences do come, as manifestly turn  
 both to the Detriment, and Disparagement  
 of true Religion.

THIS is the virtuous Mean, in which  
 Zeal, and Moderation meet in one: This  
 is the happy Temperament of both, which  
 enables those who are furnished with it,  
 to maintain the Cause of Religion, sedately,  
 and resolutely at once; *i. e.* in such a Man-  
 ner, as best becomes our holy Religion,  
 and the Wisdom, and Meekness of its Au-  
 thor.

AND I here should be unjust, both to the  
 Zeal, and Moderation of our most religious  
 Queen; if I should not gratefully remem-  
 ber, what she has so lately delivered from  
 the Throne, as a noble Proof of both,  
*viz.* That she shall be very careful to pre-  
 serve,



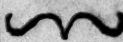
serve, and maintain the Act of Toleration, SERM.  
and to set all her Subjects Minds at quiet, XIV.  
(such is her princely Clemency, and Moderation to all) but that her own Principles must always keep her entirely firm, to the Interests, and Religion of the *Church of England*; and encline her to encourage those that have the truest Zeal, (and that's the truest Zeal that copies closest, after so excellent an Example) to support it.

*Seventhly*, To make our Zeal the more effectual, and the more eminently serviceable to our common Edification, we ought to accommodate it, not only to the Needs of our own Souls, but to the Exigences of God's Church; and the Circumstances of Things in the Time and Place, that Providence shall allot to us, for our sojourning here on Earth.

AND here we ought to begin at the right End, *i. e.* with ordering our own Conversation aright, or rectifying what is amiss in our own Conduct; that so our Instructions, Admonitions, or Reproofs may be so much the more efficacious upon others that want them. For these *Christian* Offices, these charitable Expressions  
of

SERM. of Zeal, are always best accepted, and  
XIV. most regarded, when they are warranted  
by a suitable Example; when Men make  
it their first Care to give their *Christian*  
Brethren this unquestionable Evidence, that  
they themselves are thoroughly confirmed  
in the Belief, and Practice of those Things,  
which they press so zealously upon o-  
thers.

THIS Foundation once laid, they who  
are inspired with a godly Zeal will pro-  
ceed regularly in the rest of their Work;  
and such their Zeal will not only fit grace-  
fully upon them, but become as Armour  
of Proof against all the fiery Darts of the  
Devil. They will then be bold in the  
Cause of God, and contend earnestly for  
the Faith, whenever it is openly impugned,  
or secretly undermined. They will keep  
constantly to the good old Paths, although  
they should spy very great Numbers on  
every Hand, either wandring, or desert-  
ing; nay, although they should see them-  
selves exposed to Discouragements, and  
Difficulties every Step they take, through  
the unhappy Mistakes of the Ignorant, or the  
wilful Misconstructions of the Malicious;  
through

through the Carelessness, and Neglect of SERM.  
the Indifferent, or the Scorn, and Con- XIV.  
tempt of the Profane. 

IN a Word, they will set themselves resolutely to oppose the fashionable Vices, and growing Corruptions of the Age, they will not fail to appear *as burning, and shining Lights in the midst of a crooked, and perverse Generation*: Lights that will make Men see (what they hate) *that their Deeds are evil*; Lights that will make the Cheeks of Sinners glow with Shame, if they have any Remains of Grace, or even common Modesty; such Lights at least as may warn the careless, and the heedless ones from running upon those Rocks of Offence, that lie full in their Way, and endanger the Shipwreck both of sound Faith, and a good Conscience.

AND they who are truly zealous for their God, will not be discouraged in these their pious Endeavours, much less diverted from the steady Course of Virtue, by the strong Torrent of prevailing Wickedness; for they still will animate themselves with the Hope of bringing some Degree of Honour to God, and doing some little Service

vice



SERM. vice to the Flock of *Christ*, if they can  
 XIV. but save some few Souls from Death, and  
 ~~~~~ cover some Part of a great Multitude of  
 Sins.

To which good End may we all in our
 several Capacities zealously contribute, and
 may God accept our Zeal, direct, and pro-
 sper it for the Advancement of his own
 Honour, and the Edification, and Salva-
 tion of those Souls, for whom *Christ* died.

*Now to God the Father, God the Son,
 and God the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is
 due, all Praise, Glory, Might, Majesty, and
 Dominion, now, henceforth, and for ever-
 more. Amen.*



The End of the Second Volume.

